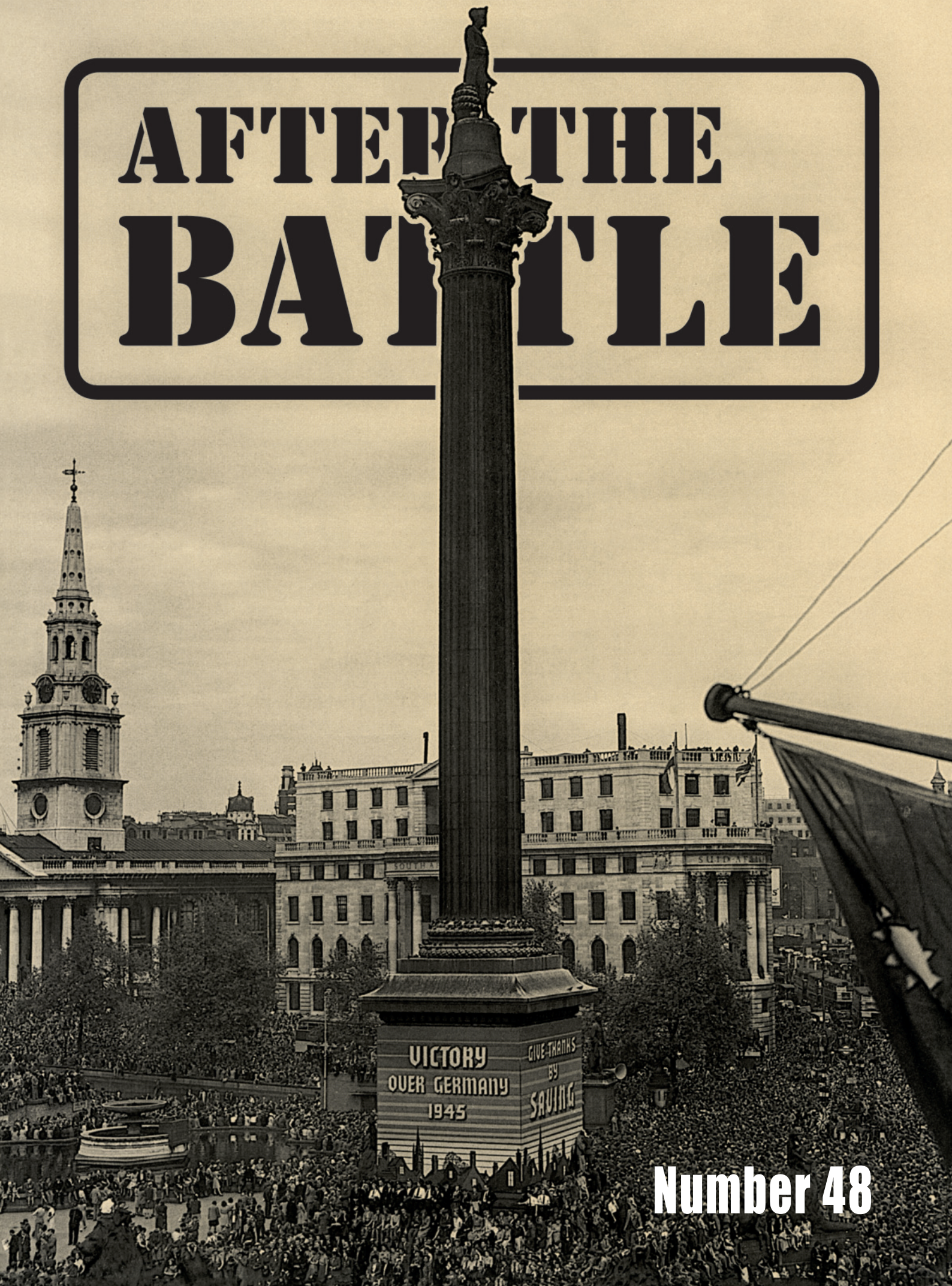
AFTER THE BATTLE



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Front Cover: The surrender of Germany brought victory in Europe: Trafalgar Square, London, May 8, 1945. (US Army)

Centre Pages: The Lüneburg Heath Memorial which now stands on New College Square opposite the Royal Military Academy Officers' Mess at Sandhurst. When the original bronze plaque was stolen in Germany, the new one with a revised style of lettering was inset into the stone face to make its removal more difficult. (Compare with the original on page 13.)

Back Cover: Missing for nearly forty years, the remains of SS-Hauptsturmführer Michael Wittmann, Germany's panzer ace, now lie with those of his crew killed on August 8, 1944 in the Deutsche Soldatenfriedhof at La Cambe, Normandy.

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Lieutenant Colonel Bertram Kalish, left, and Lieutenant Colonel Jules K. French, right, discuss the terms of surrender with Generalmajor Botho Elster, centre, and his staff in Romorantin on September 15, 1944. Elster was born in Berlin-Steglitz on May 17, 1894. He was an Oberst and the commander of Panzer-Regiment 8 of the 10. Panzer-Division during the campaign on the western front in 1940. His experience with the panzer arm being invaluable, he was charged to form the Panzerbrigade 100 (created March 1, 1941) and Panzerbrigade 101 (July 5, 1941) with obsolete tanks, most of them captured from the French. After a period spent on the staff of Heeresgruppe D in the Netherlands in late 1941, he was posted back to command Panzerbrigade 100 until April 1943 when he took over Feldkommandanturen 894 one month after his promotion to Generalmajor. On April 1, 1944, he took command of Feldkommandanturen 541 in Biarritz. He died at Böblingen in 1952. Jean Paul Pallud, our French investigator, researched the remarkable story behind the pictures and established just where they had been taken, even though no precise locations were given. In 1984 he visited the area, retraced the route, and took the comparisons. He recalls that the 83rd Division had already accepted the surrender of St Malo in August 1944. (US Signal Corps)

Surrender on the field of battle: Gruppe Elster, Beaugency, France, 1944

After the Allied landings in southern France in August 1944, when the US Seventh Army started its move northwards, Oberkommando der Wehrmacht immediately perceived the perilous situation into which the German troops in south-western France were being forced with the US Third Army advancing across the country further to the north. German forces were now in great danger of being cut off and an orderly withdrawal was organised by Armeegruppe G under General der Pionier Karl Sachs, the commander of LXIV. Armeekorps. Previously a reserve corps, under the pressing necessity of a crumbling western front, it had been upgraded to a full Army Corps on August 5.

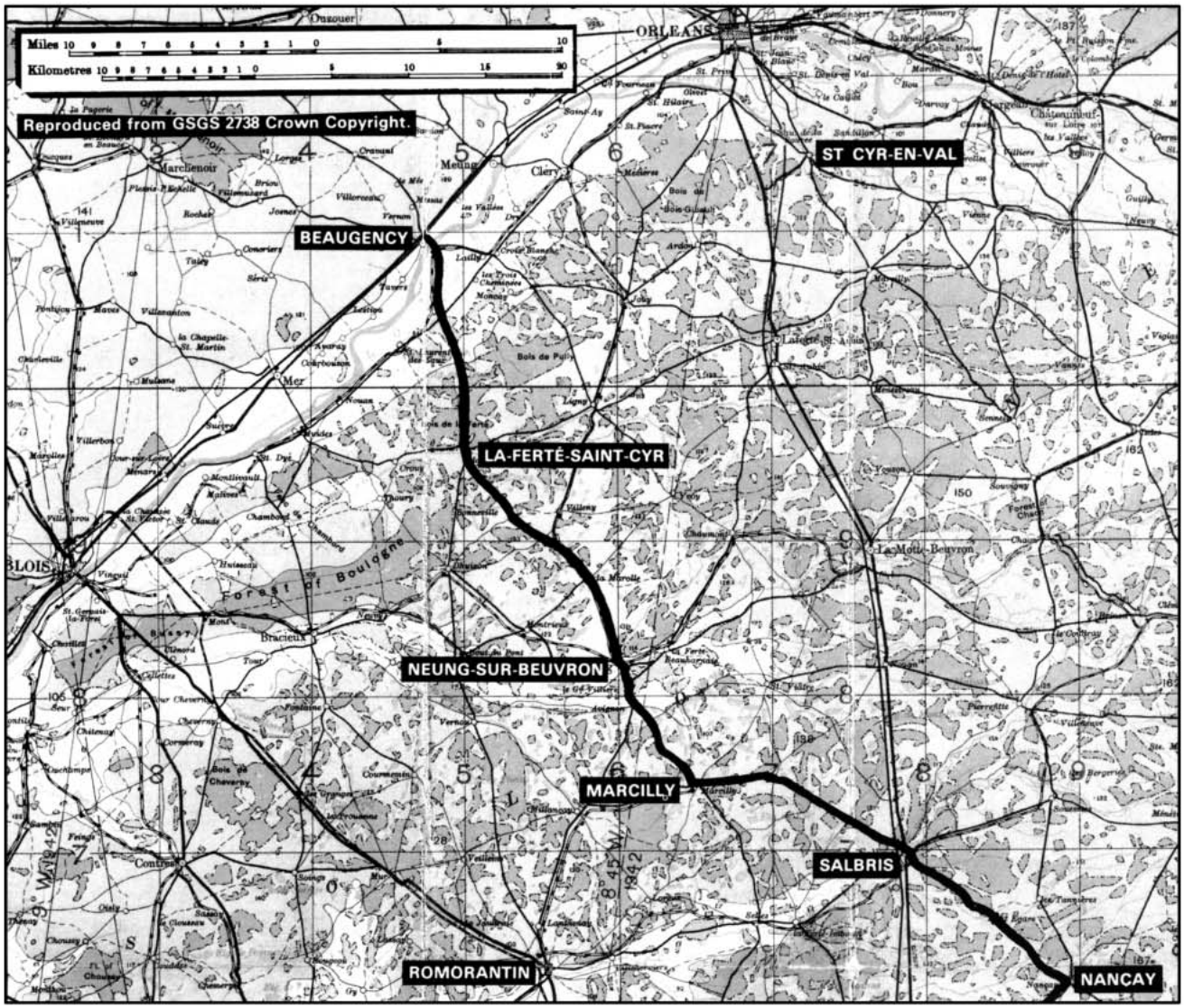
The order for withdrawal was issued on August 18. The troops still in south-western France were mostly 'rear area' units: occupation troops, garrisons from the Kriegsmarine, Luftwaffe ground crews, technicians from the Reichsarbeitdienst, the National Labour Service, the only 'field' unit being the 16. Infanterie-Division. This was actually a new division which had been assembling in the Bordeaux area since the beginning of August around the remnants of the 16. Luftwaffen-Feld-Division destroyed in Normandy and the 158. Reserve-Division. Most probably in an attempt to maintain morale, the order was worded so that the withdrawal would be interpreted as a military operation to clear the sector Tours - Bourges - Montluçon - Périgueux. The large assorted collection of individuals and units involved was formed into three march groups — Gruppe Nord — Gruppe Mitte and Gruppe Süd — while two garrisons were to be left behind to cover the rear. All equipment and supplies that could not be transported by the groups were to be destroyed.

The original plan was as follows. A security detachment, whose role it was to provide reconnaissance and flank protection, was to proceed to the sector south and south-east of Orléans and check it for any partisan activity. Then Gruppe Nord, which had assembled in the area north and east of Poitiers, would follow and there establish a blocking line and, as soon as this had been carried out, Gruppe Mitte assembled north of Angoulème, and Gruppe Süd north of Bordeaux, would move by way of Angoulème, Poitiers and Châteauroux.

The first part of the operation was carried out according to plan: Gruppe Nord established itself between Tours and Poitiers while Gruppe Mitte and Gruppe Süd had started their own moves. However, as the two American armies were closing the gap through which LXIV. Armeekorps had directed the withdrawing groups, a change of plan was now necessary. New orders were issued and the original groups were reorganised on August 18 into one convoy of fast-moving vehicles, a second convoy of slower vehicles, and a foot column. The first two groups were to consist only of 'combat' troops — a loose description as most of these men came from second line units — whilst the last one was to

GERMANY SURRENDERS

Previous page and above: **Surrender with dignity. With the Reichskriegsflagge at the head of the column, these men of Gruppe Elster march north along the N825 (now the D925) through Neung-sur-Beuvron, 40 kilometres south of Orléans. The picture was taken by an American photographer on September 16 or 17. This is quite probably the group escorted by André Gallon — note that each man carries two stick grenades for personal defence in case of attack from the FFI. These men possibly belonged to the naval group, originally a part of Gruppe Süd, as the non-receipt of new orders on August 27 forced it to miss one of the motorised convoys and instead join the foot column. (US Signal Corps)**



Lieutenant Sam Magill of Ashtabula, Ohio, who led the platoon which first made contact with Generalmajor Elster. He refused to fight a mock battle to salve German honour.

Above: **September 16, 1944. Escorted by Lieutenant Colonel French (on the right), from Merriefield, Fairfax County, Virginia, Generalmajor Elster and his staff approach the formal surrender ceremony site at the southern end of the bridge across the Loire at Beaugency. (US Signal Corps)** *Below:* **This is the view taken fifty metres from the bridge looking southwards along the reclassified N825.**

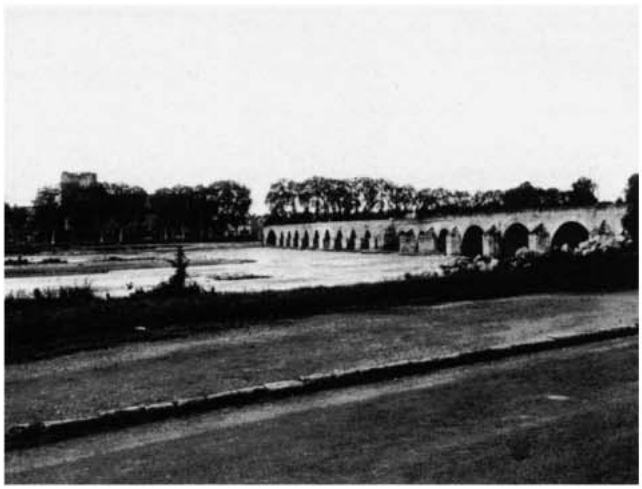
include, besides the units that could not be motorised, all the civilians and men unfit for duty. This last group was placed under the command of Generalmajor Botho Elster who had been commander of the Feldkommandanturen 541 in Biarritz until August 14.

The OKW followed the withdrawal of LXIV. Armeekorps anxiously and the daily situation report on September 1 noted: 'On the Loire front, particularly between Tours and Orléans, the enemy conducted strong reconnaissance activity. Since August 28, Gruppe Süd has been engaged against strong groups of partisans, well armed and dressed in uniform.'

Generalmajor Elster urged his troops forward in an effort to reach the Loire river before they were cut off and, having lost contact with the faster-moving motorised elements ahead, they arrived at Poitiers on September 3. The move continued at an agonisingly slow pace under incessant harassment by French FFI units. Two days later the column was spread out along the open road between Poitiers and Châteauroux and in this precarious situation it suffered two air attacks causing several casualties and loss of supplies. With the march slowed to a snail's pace, with few supplies and precious little ammunition,

in the face of more determined attacks from the FFI and American aircraft, Generalmajor Elster decided that against such odds there was nothing to be gained by continuing the retreat.

The OKW report for September 6 gave the last news of the group as still being a 'fighting' unit: 'The bulk of the 16. Infanterie-Division is assembled in the area of Langres, the last part of the column being south-west of Autun.



Having stopped near the bridge, visible in the background, Colonel French offers a cigarette to the German commander about to take part in a difficult, if historic, moment. They are probably awaiting the arrival of the 83rd Division Commander, Major General Robert C. Macon. The unnamed officer representing the FFI is dressed in the French uniform of 1940.

Intent on getting every ounce of propaganda from the bloodless surrender of nearly 20,000 of the enemy, the Signal Corps were on hand to film and record the ceremony on the approach to the bridge. The unidentified French officer and Lieutenant Colonel

The bulk of the foot-column (Marine, Luftwaffe, RAD) has reached the Nevers sector.' (It ought to be noted that even if most of the 16. Infanterie-Division had successfully escaped the trap, it was nevertheless in such a bad shape after this withdrawal that it had to be completely rebuilt as the 16. Volks-Grenadier-Division in October 1944. The foot-column Gruppe Elster was never to reach and pass the Nevers area.)

By now American units had reached the area and the 83rd Infantry Division was holding positions north of the Loire from the mouth of the river to Orléans. Patrols were constantly sent south across the river to test the German strength and one of these patrols from the Intelligence and Reconnaissance Platoon of the 39th Infantry Regiment made contact with members of the FFI who had been harassing Gruppe Elster for several days. The FFI reported the Germans to be in the vicinity of Issoudun and stated that they would probably be in a mood to consider terms of surrender if approached by the Americans. Lieutenant Samuel W. Magill, the Intelligence and Reconnaissance Platoon commander, made contact with Generalmajor Elster at Châteauroux on September 8 and, although willing to surrender, the German commander intimated that for appearances sake he would prefer first to have a token engagement against the American units. ('You do not surrender to the opposing enemy without having fired at him and been fired at by him'!) Lieutenant Magill rejected the idea of a sham battle and managed to convince Generalmajor Elster that unless he surrendered immediately, his troops would be bombed out of existence. Elster tentatively agreed and said he would meet Allied officers in Issoudun on the afternoon of September 10.

Major General Robert C. Macon, commanding the 83rd Infantry Division, personally led the American delegation which presented the terms of surrender to Generalmajor Elster at the latter's headquarters in Issoudun on September 10. The German commander was ordered to stop any further movement of his troops out of the area; to assemble them south of the Loire river and to march to Beaugency where a formal surrender would take place. While the conference was in session, planes of the XIX Tactical Air Command swept over the town as a demonstration of Allied superiority and this achieved its desired purpose in persuading the wavering Elster to agree without further ado.

The terms finally agreed provided for the move north of the Loire river to be made in three columns: one to Orléans, one to Beaugency and one to Mer and this mainly along secondary roads. The Germans were permitted to retain all their weapons and equipment until they had reached the north bank of the river: a sine qua non demand in view of their

A hastily-constructed PoW enclosure on the banks of the river — picture taken looking south from the eastern side of Beaugency. (US Signal Corps)

French face Major General Macon as Generalmajor Elster gives a rather sloppy 'feet apart' salute. Today there is no plaque or memorial on the spot to record one of the most significant capitulations of the war.

fear of the marauding FFIs. (The Americans, probably because they too were thin on the ground, and possibly somewhat anxious in this somewhat unusual situation, asked the French resistance to provide guides for the groups of German 'prisoners', with the intention of avoiding any clashes with French civilians.)

Some 7,000 officers and men were marched further north to Orléans — these pictures were taken south of the town near the Ferme de la Patte d'Oie (on the left), not far from the D126 from Saint-Cyr-en-Val. As late as two years ago items abandoned by the Germans were still being found in this field.

The move of the three columns north-westwards began as scheduled on the morning of September 13 and continued over the next three days without serious disorder although minor incidents of clashes with FFI groups were reported. André Gallon, who was at this time in charge of the Secteur Numéro 2 of the Resistance north of Vierzon, had volunteered to escort one of the groups. From his recollection (recorded by Jacques Guérold on November 19, 1984) his column started at 8.30 a.m. from Quincy, a village on the River Cher, some thirteen miles south-east of Vierzon. Riding in a car which displayed a large tricolour flag, André Gallon led the way, some hundred yards or so ahead of the column. He remembers the Germans as being well disciplined and still retaining all their weapons and supply and service elements. When the column reached the first village, Gallon noted that safety catches were slipped and machine guns waved about in a threatening manner, whereupon he asked the German officer in charge to adopt a less aggressive profile.

The column crossed over the canal and the Yèvre river at Foëcy, six miles east of Vierzon, without further incident, and the Germans took the opportunity to dump some of their weapons and ammunition into the water. The move north continued through Saint-Laurent, Vouzeron, Nançay, Salbris and Marcilly, and late in the afternoon the column reached Neung-sur-Beuvron. Here the Germans entered the village in perfect order, marching behind their unfurled battle-flag. This so shocked the villagers that it proved difficult to find accommodation for the Germans that night. In the end some men went into the local school and others into various barns. The officers were billeted in houses in the village itself. That evening André Gallon had to intervene to calm the customers in a café when some Germans entered with the intention of getting served!

Early next morning Gallon remembers that the troops mustered quickly and in good order, proving still to be a disciplined and well trained force. Before departure, the officers who had been put up for the night offered to pay their French hosts — the gesture being vehemently refused!

When the column arrived at La-Ferté-Saint-Cyr, it halted while more weapons and supplies were piled high and set alight. Documents and money (the very notes that the people of Neung-sur-Beuvron had just

More German prisoners arrive at La Ferme de la Patte d'Oie in a variety of transport. Photographs taken on September 17. (US Signal Corps)

refused) together with some ammunition were all thrown onto the fire to stoke up a roaring firework! The German officers then ordered the men to fall in in parade formation, together with men from some of the other groups who had joined them there, at which point they were reviewed by a General (probably Botho Elster) and other high ranking officers who had arrived in cars, escorted by some Americans.

This over, the move started once again towards Beaugency and contact was soon established with the Americans waiting there for their 'prisoners'. The American officer in charge briefly and coolly thanked the French escort and asked them to leave immediately as one of the terms of the surrender was that the disarming of the German troops was to be done out of sight of any French Resistance unit, and that the surrendered weapons would under no circumstances be handed over to them. Before André Gallon actually left, the German officer in charge of the group he had led came up to him and offered him a small case containing some food and a pair of Kriegsmarine field-glasses to 'thank him for having shielded them from the Red Maquis'.

On Saturday 16, at the southern entrance to the bridge at Beaugency, Generalmajor Botho Elster formally surrendered himself and his command to Major General Macon who represented Lieutenant General William H. Simpson, the commander of the US Ninth Army which had become operational eleven days earlier. By 8.30 a.m. on the following day all three columns had passed north of the Loire river and 754 officers, 18,850 men and ten women (!) had been assembled in a hastily-constructed prisoner-of-war enclosure erected just north of the river. All told 400 civilian vehicles, 500 trucks and 1,000 horse-drawn vehicles had been captured, together with an unrecorded number of weapons, supplies and ammunition.

Although this little-known 'battlefield surrender' took place in September 1944, we felt it provides an unusual contrast to the later capitulations in 1945 which took place when Germany was a beaten nation. When we look back forty years later at the end of the war in Europe, the Elster surrender stands out as a humanitarian gesture to save life and avoid unnecessary casualties.

Although the American caption writers to these photographs attempted to turn the Beaugency surrender into a tremendous American victory — which in some sense it was with nearly 20,000 prisoners in the bag without a shot being fired — nevertheless they tended to disparage Elster for the ignominious end of his unit. However, the men under his command behaved well and this action probably enabled another 30,000 men to escape from the closing American pincers in south-western France. Reorganised and re-equipped they were to give a good account of themselves in the battles to follow on the West Wall and in the Ardennes.

Nice collection of surrendered arms stacked beside the road. The second rate status of these troops can be gauged by the fact that there are no MG42s — only older models: the MG34 and obsolete MG13 and MG30(t). (US Signal Corps)

Fortune of war. Property of a different, yet arguably more attractive, model yet to be given up. Ten women are recorded as being surrendered and according to the caption this French girl, engaged to this Luftwaffe airman, refused to leave him! (US Signal Corps)

The decision for no negotiated armistice: Casablanca, January, 1943 — the so-called 'unconditional surrender parley' between Roosevelt and Churchill. (Associated Press)

Unconditional Surrender

In November 1942 President Roosevelt proposed a Big Three conference between Great Britain, America and the Soviet Union to discuss and plan future strategy following the anticipated defeat of the German and Italian armies in North Africa. Winston Churchill promptly replied that he thought it would be a sensible idea but Josef Stalin regretted that he would be unable to leave Russia at the present time. Nevertheless it was agreed that the two Western Allies and their staffs should still go ahead with the meeting and North Africa was selected as a convenient location for the conference.

On January 14, 1943 the two Allied leaders met at the Hotel Anfa in a suburb of Casablanca, the location of General George Patton's command in Morocco. In the heavily-guarded complex of 'Camp Anfa', President Roosevelt, under the disguise of 'Admiral Q', and the Prime Minister as 'Mr P' spent the next ten days thrashing out policy for the future conduct of the war.

The first mention that Germany would be required to surrender 'unconditionally' is attributed to the President at a dinnertime conversation with the Prime Minister, though Churchill admitted in his memoirs that his recollection is vague on the point. The first confirmed use of the term came in a telegram to the British War Cabinet on January 20 concerning the wording of the final communiqué in which Churchill requested that 'I should be glad to know what the War Cabinet would think of our including in this statement a declaration of the firm intention of the United States and the British Empire to continue the war relentlessly until we have brought about the "unconditional surrender" of Germany and Japan'. Churchill explained that the omission of Italy was to encourage a break-up there. He said that 'the President liked this idea, and it would stimulate our friends in every country'.

However, after the war Churchill wrote that he was surprised to hear the words used by the President in his speech at the Press Conference on January 24, and Roosevelt later admitted to his personal adviser, Harry Hopkins, that 'Winston and I had no time to prepare for it [the Press Conference] and the thought popped into my mind that they had called Grant [General later President Ulysses] "Old Unconditional Surrender", and the next thing I knew I had said it'. Churchill records that, nevertheless, he supported the President's words in his own statement to the Press and later that year took the opportunity of a speech delivered at the Guildhall in London on June 30 to define just what unconditional surrender meant:

'We, the United Nations, demand from the Nazi, Fascist, and Japanese tyrannies unconditional surrender. By this we mean that their will-power to resist must be completely broken, and that they must yield themselves absolutely to our justice and mercy. It also means that we must take all those far-sighted measures which are necessary to prevent the world from being again convulsed, wrecked, and blackened by their calculated plots and ferocious aggressions. It does not mean, and it never can mean, that we are to stain our victorious arms by inhumanity or by mere lust of vengeance, or that we do not plan a world in which all branches of the human family may look forward to what the American Declaration of Independence finely calls "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness".'

After the Russians had made their own policy clear at the Teheran Conference in December 1944 (the Soviets felt a distinction should be made between Germans as such and Nazis), Churchill further stated that 'by "unconditional surrender" I mean that the Germans have no *rights* to any particular form of treatment. For instance, the Atlantic Charter would not apply to them as *a matter of right*. On the other hand, the victorious nations owe it to themselves to observe the obligations of humanity and civilisation.' Therefore, unlike the ending of Germany's earlier wars in Europe in 1871 and 1918, this time there was to be no option of prior conditions, no negotiated armistice, and no chance of an honourable end to hostilities.

As with all declarations of intent, the new policy of nothing less than absolute capitulation without conditions had two faces: on the one hand the hardline assuaged in part the desire of the Allied peoples for justice in a do or die struggle against a brutal foe, but on the other hand the publication of the terms of surrender in advance to the enemy left the more moderate elements in Germany no room to manoeuvre. Whether, in the long run, the Western Allies lost more than they gained by a bold public statement of their resolve is a point that has been the subject of much debate by post-war armchair critics.

Be that as it may, with the death of Hitler by his own hand in Berlin on April 30, the appointment of his successor, Grossadmiral Karl Dönitz, paved the way for a more realistic approach by the Germans to the inevitability of acceptance of surrender without conditions. By the beginning of May, the Western Allies and the USSR had virtually destroyed the German fighting machine and were engaged in the task of mopping up the disorganised elements remaining in central Germany. In the week of fighting that remained, while Hitler's successor debated his best course of action and sent representatives to sound out the Western Allies, individual German commanders made piecemeal surrenders along a wide front. SHAEF (Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force) informed army group commanders that they could receive surrenders of forces facing their fronts but that anything more extensive had to be submitted to the Supreme Commander, General of the Army Dwight D. Eisenhower.

As early as August 1944, the Combined Chiefs of Staff had issued a short document which outlined instructions to cover possible capitulations by German forces surrendering as units through their commanders. This document rested on three main principles:

(a) terms of capitulation were unconditional and had to be clearly and expressly limited to the immediate military objects of local surrender;

(b) no commitment of any kind was to be made to the enemy;

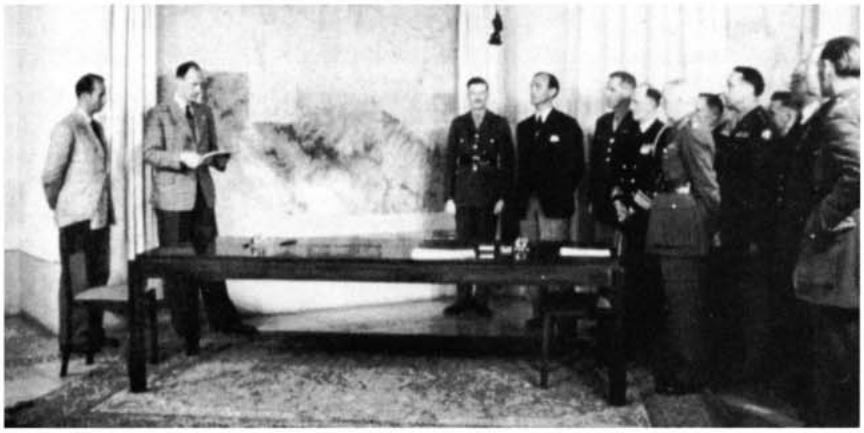
(c) capitulation was to be made without prejudice to and was to be superseded by any general instrument of surrender which might be imposed by the United States, the United Kingdom and the USSR.

Sunday April 29, 1945: curtains for the Axis. That morning Mussolini's body was publicly displayed in Milan; that afternoon German forces in Italy surrendered; the following day Hitler committed suicide in Berlin. The first formal German surrender took place at Allied headquarters located in the Royal Palace at Caserta, just north of Naples. (E.N.I.T.)

Caserta, Italy

Informal steps toward peace had been taken in mid-January 1945 when Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop on his own initiative sent emissaries to make contact with Allied representatives for the purpose of discussing a negotiated settlement. More substantial overtures, looking to final surrender of German forces in Italy, were made in early February by representatives of the German command in northern Italy, who arranged for meetings in Switzerland with Allied agents. These long-drawn-out negotiations were brought to a close only after a comic-opera interlude in which Generalfeldmarschall Albert Kesselring, Oberbefehlshaber West, removed the Oberbefehlshaber Südwest and his Chief-of-Staff and ordered their arrest, and in which the deposed officers brought about the arrest of their successors!

The first formal German surrender took place at 2.00 p.m. on April 29 when representatives of Generaloberst Heinrich-Gottfried von Vietinghof genannt Scheel, Oberbefehlshaber Südwest, who had been restored to his position by Kesselring, and SS-Obergruppenführer und General der Waffen SS Karl Friedrich Wolff agreed to terminate hostilities at midday, May 2, 1945. Their surrender affected part of Carinthia, the provinces of Vorarlberg, Tirol, and Salzburg, as well as all of Italy except that part of Venezia Giulia which is east of the Isonzo.



There is a controversy as to which room was used for the signing of the 'sports-coat' surrender, described in one account as being in the 'salone da ballo' but the ballroom decor is totally different to that depicted. Traditionally tourists today are shown the 'Sala di Astrea' but that, too, does not conform with the photographic evidence. Lieutenant General William Morgan, Chief-of-Staff to the Supreme Allied Commander Mediterranean accepted on behalf of Field-Marshal Alexander. (IWM)

The surrender was signed in the headquarters of the Allied command located in the Bourbon Royal Palace at Caserta, some ten miles to the north of Naples. Standing in the extensive parkland and gardens, part of the Palace is now used as an Italian air force officers' academy and closed to visitors, but the room now described as the one where the ceremony took place is open every day except Mondays. However the fact that the decorations in this room do not correspond to those which appear in the photographs taken in 1945, lends some doubt as to whether the room shown to the public is the correct one.

Looking rather incongruous in civilian clothes, Oberstleutnant Victor von Schweinitz, on the General Staff of Armeegruppe C, signs on behalf of Generaloberst von Vietinghoff, the German C-in-C South-West and Commander Army Group C. (IWM)

SS-Sturmbannführer Fugen Wenner represented SS-Obergruppenführer Karl Wolff, the Supreme Commander of the SS and police in Italy and the plenipotentiary general of the General of the German Wehrmacht in Italy.

On May 2 Grossadmiral Karl Dönitz moved his headquarters to Flensburg and early the following morning a delegation arrived at British lines north of Hamburg to parley with the C-in-C, 21st Army Group. They were first escorted to Lieutenant-General Sir Miles Dempsey's Second Army HQ at Häcklingen, about thirty miles south-east of the city, on the southern outskirts of Lüneburg itself. (IWM)

Lüneburg, Germany

By May 2 the German military situation in the north was worsened by the breakthrough of British forces from Lauenburg to Lübeck and of American forces to Wismar. These actions closed 'the last gate' through which the Germans could be brought back from the Mecklenburg-Pomerania area. Dönitz held that further fighting in north-west Europe against the Allied powers had now lost its purpose and, making use of a British offer to spare Hamburg as an opening for negotiations, he announced that the city would not be defended. He offered to send a delegation headed by Generaladmiral Hans Georg von Friedeburg, who had succeeded Dönitz as head of the Kriegsmarine, and General der Infanterie Hans Kinzel, Chief-of-Staff to Generalfeldmarschall Ernst Busch, Oberbefehlshaber Nordwest, to discuss peace negotiations with Field-Marshal Sir Bernard Montgomery on the following day. On the evening of May 2, Dönitz moved his headquarters from Plön to Flensburg, just south of the Danish border.

Generaladmiral von Friedeburg and his party had been instructed to promise that Hamburg would not be defended, and they were to try to secure the 21st Army Group commander's permission for German troops, including the 3. Panzer-Armee, 12. Armee, and 21. Armee, to retire west of the Elbe. They also wanted permission to pass German civilian refugees through the British lines to Schleswig-Holstein. Such terms the army group commanders were not allowed to grant.

At 11.30 a.m. on Thursday, May 3, von Friedeburg and Kinzel, accompanied by two staff officers, Konteradmiral Gerhard Wagner and Major Hans Jochen Friedel, arrived at Montgomery's TAC headquarters which had been set up on a hilltop on Lüneburg Heath just outside the little village of Wendisch Evern. There they were conducted to the Field-Marshal's caravan and lined up beside the Union Jack flying from a temporary flagpole. After keeping them waiting (no doubt for the customary psychological period) Field-Marshal Montgomery appeared. They saluted, and through his interpreter the Field-Marshal asked: 'Who are these men?' and then on receiving an answer: 'What do they want?'

In his own inimitable style, Field-Marshal Montgomery described what happened next: 'They said, "We've come here from Feldmarschall Busch to ask you to accept the surrender of the three German armies that are now withdrawing in front of the Russians in Mecklenburg between Rostock and Berlin. They are the 3rd Panzer, the 12th and 21st

From here it was only about three miles to Field-Marshal Montgomery's Tactical Headquarters at Wendisch Evern on Lüneburg Heath. Here Generaladmiral Hans Georg von Friedeburg is directed to the transport to take four of the party to see Monty. The other officers are, from left to right, Konteradmiral Gerhard Wagner, Major Hans Jochen Friedel and General der Infanterie Hans Kinzel. Today Dempsey's former headquarters is a psychiatric clinic.

'Who are these men? What do they want?' Conqueror meets the conquered outside his caravan beneath the Union Jack. The flag now hangs in the parish church of Englishcombe near Bath — see After the Battle No 25. (IWM)

Armies." They said, "We want you to accept the surrender of these armies. We are very anxious about the condition of the civilians who are driven along as these armies flee from the advancing Russians and we want you to accept their surrender."

'I said, "No, certainly not. These armies are fighting the Russians and therefore if they surrender to anybody it must be to the Russians — it has nothing to do with me and I am not going to have any dealings with anything on my eastern flank from Wismar to Domitz on the Elbe, on which flank we are now in closest contact with the Russians. This is the Russians' business. A Russian peace, therefore you surrender to the Russians. Now this subject is closed." I then said to them, "Are you prepared to surrender to me the German forces on my western and northern flanks — that is to say, all the German forces between Lübeck and Holland, and all those forces that they have in support of them? These forces including the German army in Denmark — will you surrender those?"

'They said "No". So far it had been a very good discussion. Then they said, "We are most anxious about the condition of civilians in the areas of Lübeck and on the northern flank — we are very anxious about them and we would like to come to some agreement with you by which these civilians can be saved slaughter in battle. We thought perhaps you would make some plan with us whereby you would advance slowly and we would withdraw slowly and all the civilians would be all right." So far we had not got very far.

'I said, "No. There is nothing doing. I am not going to discuss any conditions at all as to what I am going to do. I wonder whether you officers know what is the battle situation on the Western Front? In case you don't I will show it to you." I produced a map which showed the battle situation. That situation was a great shock to them. They were quite amazed and very upset. I was perfectly frank and held back no secrets. They were in a con-

Nothing to commemorate the historic spot on what is now part of a Bundeswehr training area.

Von Friedeburg reads the letter from Generalfeldmarschall Keitel offering to surrender the forces opposing the Russians.

After a break for lunch, Field-Marshal Montgomery states his three points necessary for the German surrender. (IWM)

dition — and in a very good, ripe condition — to receive a further blow." '

At this stage, however, the Field-Marshal considered a break for lunch would give the German officers time to reflect on what he had said. In a tent by themselves, they had their lunch in the presence of one British officer.

When Montgomery indicated to General Eisenhower that overtures for negotiations were being made, the Supreme Commander declared that only unconditional surrender would be accepted. He added that an offer to give up Denmark, the Netherlands, the Frisian Islands, Heligoland, and Schleswig-Holstein could be considered as a tactical matter and the surrender accepted. Any larger offer, such as a proposal to give up Norway or forces on another front, would have to be handled at SHAEF headquarters.

After lunch the Field-Marshal sent for the German delegation. 'I said to them, "You must clearly understand three points.

"One. You must surrender to me unconditionally all the German forces in Holland, in Friesland, including the Frisian Islands, Heligoland, and all other islands, in Schleswig-Holstein and in Denmark.

"Two. Once you have done that I am then prepared to discuss with you the implications of the surrender — that is to say I am prepared to say to you how we will dispose of the German forces, how we will occupy the area concerned, how we will deal with the civilians and so on. Once you have done Point Number One I will discuss Point Number Two." (You see, they wanted me to do Point Number Two first.)

"Three. If you don't agree to Point Number One I shall go on with the war and will be delighted to do so and am ready. All your soldiers will be killed. These are the three points — there is no alternative — one, two, three, finished!"

'Then they said to me, "We came here entirely for the purpose of asking you to accept surrender of these German armies on your eastern flank and we have been given powers to agree to that subject only. We have no power to agree to what you now want. That is a new one on us. But two of us will now go back again to where we came from, get agreement and come back again. Two will stay here with you".'

The Field-Marshal then drafted a minute on what had been discussed and proposed, this being signed by himself and von Friedeburg. Generaladmiral von Friedeburg and Major Friedel then took the document back to Dönitz at Flensburg by car, escorted through Hamburg and into the German lines by the Field-Marshal's A.D.C., Lieutenant-Colonel Trumbull Warren. They had instructions to return by 6.00 p.m. the next day. The other two German officers remained at the Field-Marshal's headquarters.

Early the following morning, Friday, May 4, 'D' Squadron of the 11th Hussars, stationed at Quickborn, ten miles north of Hamburg, were warned to expect the German delegation. The German cars arrived in the afternoon and were halted by No. 4 Troop. Captain Horsford went forward to investigate and shortly afterwards 21st Army Group staff officers arrived to escort the German officers back to Wendisch Evern.

Meanwhile, at his headquarters, Field-Marshal Montgomery was confident the Germans would return with full powers to sign the surrender. At 5.00 p.m. he called a press conference at which he outlined fully what had taken place the previous day and what he hoped would happen at 6.00 p.m.

Generaladmiral von Friedeburg arrived back at the Lüneburg Heath camp while the press conference was in progress, this information being passed to the Field-Marshal by one of his staff officers, Colonel Ewart. The

The German delegation returns after having discussed with Grossadmiral Dönitz the unconditional surrender of the armies facing 21st Army Group forces in the west. No-man's-land began just beyond Quickborn, some nine miles north of Hamburg. (IWM)

The meeting place was just beside the Bilsener Wohld tavern on the Kielerstrasse, widened in 1970.

The Field-Marshal reads the terms of surrender. Of the five Germans sitting round the table three were to die shortly afterwards in violent circumstances. Major Friedel (just out of the picture to the left) was killed in a motor accident while being driven to Reims on May 20, and Generaladmiral von Friedeburg (behind the microphones) committed suicide on May 23. After the surrender General der Infanterie Kinzel (right), Generalfeldmarschall Busch's Chief-of-Staff, was detailed to set up a small liaison HQ to relay 21st Army Group instructions to the German Army. He was permitted to retain his sidearm — and also wangled an attractive blonde as his personal assistant. When Montgomery's Chief-of-Staff, Major-General Sir Francis de Guingand, heard of the appointment, it was swiftly terminated; on June 25 Kinzel shot both the girl and himself. After the war Konteradmiral Wagner (on von Friedeburg's right) served in the Naval Department of the West German Defence Ministry. Odd man out with his back to the camera, the late arrival: Oberst Fritz Poleck from the staff of OKW. (IWM)

Instrument of Surrender

of

All German armed forces in HOLLAND, in

northwest Germany including all islands,

and in DENMARK.

1. The German Command agrees to the surrender of all German armed forces in HOLLAND, in northwest GERMANY including the FRISIAN ISLANDS and HELIGOLAND and all other islands, in SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN, and in DENMARK, to the C.-in-C. 21 Army Group. This to include all naval ships in these areas. These forces to lay down their arms and to surrender unconditionally.

2. All hostilities on land, on sea, or in the air by German forces in the above areas to cease at 0800 hrs. British Double Summer Time on Saturday 5 May 1945.

3. The German command to carry out at once, and without argument or comment, all further orders that will be issued by the Allied Powers on any subject.

4. Disobedience of orders, or failure to comply with them, will be regarded as a breach of these surrender terms and will be dealt with by the Allied Powers in accordance with the accepted laws and usages of war.

5. This instrument of surrender is independent of, without prejudice to, and will be superseded by any general instrument of surrender imposed by or on behalf of the Allied Powers and applicable to Germany and the German armed forces as a whole.

6. This instrument of surrender is written in English and in German.

The English version is the authentic text.

7. The decision of the Allied Powers will be final if any doubt or dispute arises as to the meaning or interpretation of the surrender terms.

B. L. Montgomery
Field-Marshal

4 May 1945
1830 hrs.

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Field-Marshal

4 May 1945
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There are at least two copies of the signed document in existence. Note the variation in the date. (National Archives/IWM)

Field-Marshal, however, carried on with his briefing, ending with the words: 'The next scene will be up top in the tent'.

The German officers, plus a new arrival, Oberst Fritz Poleck, were again paraded under the flag for the photographers. The Field-Marshal took von Friedeburg into his caravan, which was parked under the trees overlooking the camp site. Asked if he would sign the surrender, von Friedeburg said he would do so. The Generaladmiral came out of the caravan at 6.20 p.m. followed by Montgomery.

'I gave orders for the ceremony to take place at once in a tent pitched for the purpose, which had been wired for the recording instruments' wrote Montgomery after the war. 'The German delegation went across to the tent, watched by groups of soldiers, war correspondents, photographers, and others — all very excited. They knew it was the end of the war.

'I had the surrender document all ready. The arrangements in the tent were very simple — a trestle table covered with an army blanket, an inkpot, an ordinary army pen that you could buy in a shop for twopence. There were two BBC microphones on the table. The Germans stood up as I entered; then we all sat down round the table. The Germans were clearly nervous and one of them took out a cigarette; he wanted to smoke to calm his nerves. I looked at him, and he put the cigarette away.

'In that tent on Lüneburg Heath, publicly in the presence of the Press and other spectators, I read out in English the Instrument of Surrender. I said that unless the German delegation signed this document immediately, and without argument on what would follow their capitulation, I would order the fighting to continue. I then called on each member of the German delegation by name to sign the document, which they did without any discussion. I then signed on behalf of General Eisenhower.

'The document was in English, and the delegation could not understand it; but I gave them copies in German. When adding the date I wrote 5 May, then tried to change the 5 to 4, then crossed it out and initialled it, and wrote 4 alongside. The original is typed on an ordinary sheet of army foolscap. I do not know what happened to the pen we all used; I suppose someone pinched it.'

The next day, to commemorate the signing on what Field-Marshal Montgomery had now named Victory Hill, an oak plaque was erected. Three days later it was stolen and replaced and on September 24 it was daubed with paint and later found 400 yards away.

In November 1945, the wooden marker was replaced by a more permanent stone memorial, weighing nine tons, quarried, fashioned and erected by Royal Engineers of 21st Army Group. Later a guard-room had to be erected nearby and five Germans were employed, at 89 pfennigs per hour, to guard the memorial day and night. By April 1955 the cost of security for the stone had reached DM100,000, and for economic reasons the guard was withdrawn. The following month, the tenth anniversary of the signing, the bronze plaque was stolen and unknown Germans wrote on the stone: 'Due to this victory Communism could spread in the heart of Europe. After ten years it is time to recognise the common danger. Let us forget the past.'

A new bronze plaque was made and on September 9, 1955, Major Harper, the local British Military Commandant, made the Burgermeister, Carl Basse, responsible for the safety of the monument.

For the next three years the stone remained unguarded and untouched. Then in 1958, when the British Army was due to hand over military control of that area of Germany to the new Bundeswehr, Victory Hill was designated as part of a German battle training area. As it

This temporary wooden plaque was set up to mark the event on Victory Hill. (IWM)

Later that year it was replaced by a permanent monument but its isolated position on the Heath, three miles from the nearest village, caused a considerable security problem. A guard was maintained round-the-clock for ten years — probably unique in the history of war memorials. The month after the watch was discontinued for economic reasons in April 1955, the bronze plate was prised off and has never been traced. (Karl-Heinz Leder)

In 1958, with the withdrawal of BAOR (the post-war successor to the 21st Army Group) from northern Germany and the garrison town of Lüneburg, it was recognised that not everybody would want to be reminded of what happened on the Heath in May 1945. As the memorial's safety could no longer be guaranteed, the Field-Marshal decided that it should be dismantled and re-erected at Sandhurst, the Army's training college for officers. In his re-inaugural speech on November 29 that year, Monty explained why: 'This Stone commemorates the climax of over five years of hard fighting at sea, in the air and on land. . . . It now stands where what it has to say can reach the right men — the future officers of the armed forces of Britain. They are the right men, because the key to all which happened was leadership.'

was also felt that the memorial's safety could not be guaranteed once the British military presence was withdrawn, with Field-Marshal Montgomery's permission (he had visited Lüneburg earlier that year), plans were made to dismantle and send the stones to England.

After careful consideration it was decided to re-erect it at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst and No. 17 Field Squadron, Royal Engineers were detailed to carry out the operation. Two of the largest cranes in Westphalia arrived on Victory Hill and after transportation in four sections, the monument was reconstructed on New College Square opposite the Royal Military Academy Officers' Mess.

On November 29, 1958, Field-Marshal, The Viscount Montgomery of Alamein, KG, GCB, DSO, presented the stone to Sandhurst and two additional bronze plaques were added to commemorate the removal and unveiling. Meanwhile, in Germany, the title Victory Hill was now considered inappropriate, and the historic hill on Lüneburg Heath reverted to its original name of Timeloberg.

Although ordered by General Eisenhower to give it up, the original surrender document was retained by Field-Marshal Montgomery and only photostat copies were sent to SHAEF. In the end it was Winstson Churchill who defended the Field-Marshal's right to keep the document as his personal property. In 1968 the Field-Marshal's home was broken into and he decided that the document should be handed over to the safekeeping of the Imperial War Museum. However other copies of the document were signed at the same time and at least one of these has come on the private market in recent years.

In 1975, on the 30th anniversary of the signing of the surrender, the After the Battle team returned to seek out the location of the TAC headquarters and on the afternoon of May 4 we drove into the tank training area. Nothing remained to mark the location of one of the Second World War's most significant events, nothing that is except the concrete foundation to the memorial removed seventeen years earlier.

Our photographs were taken at exactly 6.30 p.m., the time the surrender was signed. There were no other visitors . . . we alone remembered.

Erased but not forgotten. All that remains to mark the spot where the surrender was signed. Ten years ago we took this photograph at 6.30 p.m. on May 4, 1975 — precisely 30 years to the minute from when the surrender was signed. (The full story of our 30th anniversary tour was published in a special booklet, made available with a facsimile copy of the surrender document.)

Innsbruck, Austria

The Landsrat or Landhaus in Innsbruck, scene of the 19. Armee surrender. Forty years later the construction of an underground car park beneath the forecourt.

On May 3, men of the US 44th Infantry Division were advancing south into Austria via the Fern Pass which had been stoutly defended by a German unit some 300 strong. The road had been blocked by craters and a landslide, and before a full scale advance could be resumed the road had to be repaired. The division was also awaiting reinforcement from its armour and other vehicles before pushing on to Landeck and the Resia Pass on the southern frontier with Italy. It was this delay that prompted the commander of the First French Army, General Jean de Lattre de Tassigny, to try to beat the Americans into Landeck by using the Arlberg Pass further to the west near St Anton.

Unaware that de Lattre had begun a race for Landeck, the 44th Division Commander, Major General William F. Dean, was in no particular hurry to resume the advance. Emmissaries from the 19. Armee, under General der Panzertruppen Erich Brandenberger, approached American lines at Imst, twelve miles to the north on May 4. Brandenberger's initiative pre-empted an overture by General der Infanterie Friedrich Schulz to discuss the overall surrender of Heeresgruppe G (of which 19. Armee was then a part) whereby a German delegation was to enter American lines that night 75 miles away near Munich. This duplication probably resulted from Kesselring authorising both army group and army commanders to enter negotiations, from a breakdown in communications within Heeresgruppe G, or from the on-off nature of the 19. Armee's subordination to Heeresgruppe G during the preceding month, this last apparently having depended either on the whim of Kesselring or on the state of communications among the three headquarters.

The German representatives were given detailed instructions to take back to General Brandenberger with orders for him to present himself at the Landsrat in Innsbruck (30 miles to the east) the following afternoon. Detailed instructions prepared by VI Corps under Major General Edward H. Brooks specified exactly how the Germans were to be greeted: no salutes and no handshakes.

Except that Brandenberger arrived some minutes late, all went according to plan. Shortly before three o'clock General Brooks gave Brandenberger and his staff a brief period in which to confer privately upon condition that they return to the conference room at precisely 3.00 p.m. At that hour the 19. Armee surrendered unconditionally, the cease-fire being effective at 6.00 p.m. the same day.

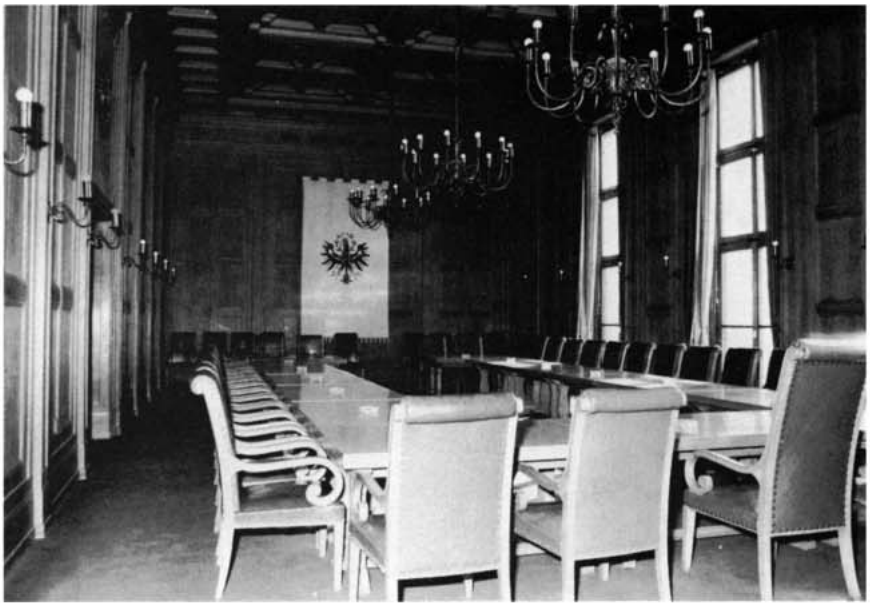
Meanwhile a regiment of the 44th Division

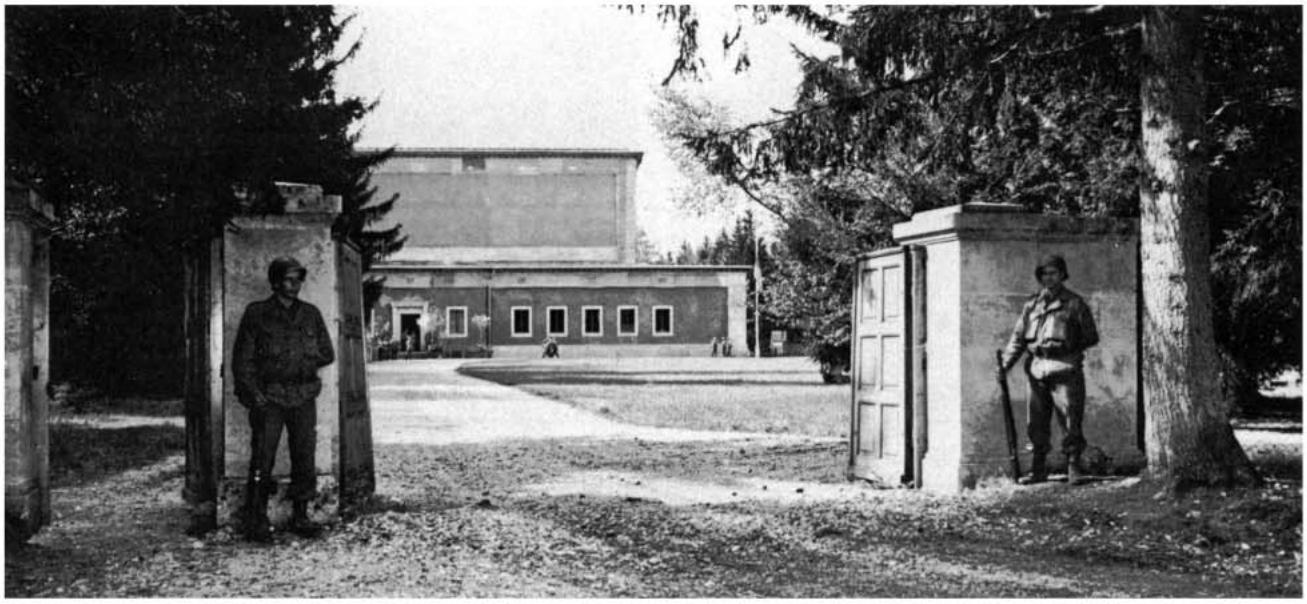
The temporary builder's fence makes an exact comparison of the arrival of General der Panzertruppen Erich Brandenberger something of a disappointment. His party is escorted by Colonel Joseph L. Longevin of the US VI Army Corps.

Brandenberger faces Major General Edward H. Brooks at the opposite end of the table. Today room No. 120 is simply labelled 'Festsaal' or banqueting room, its wartime significance unrecorded by any formal inscription or memorial. (US Army)

had resumed the advance on Landeck when mid-morning on the 5th the German commander in the region suggested a truce pending the outcome of Brandenberger's negotiations. On condition that the arrangement include evacuation of Landeck, the divisional commander agreed, and a battalion of the 44th occupied the town that afternoon, in the process unwittingly thwarting General de Lattre's effort to reach Landeck first. Not until two days later, on the 7th, would anyone bother to proceed to the Resia Pass, which de Lattre so earnestly wanted to reach.

Today the building used for the surrender is still the civic centre or town hall, the room in which the ceremony was held being now a committee chamber used for smaller council meetings or for the entertainment of guests. The construction of a new underground car park directly outside the entrance was under way when our photographs were taken in March 1985. No plaque or inscription could be found recording the surrender signing in 1945.



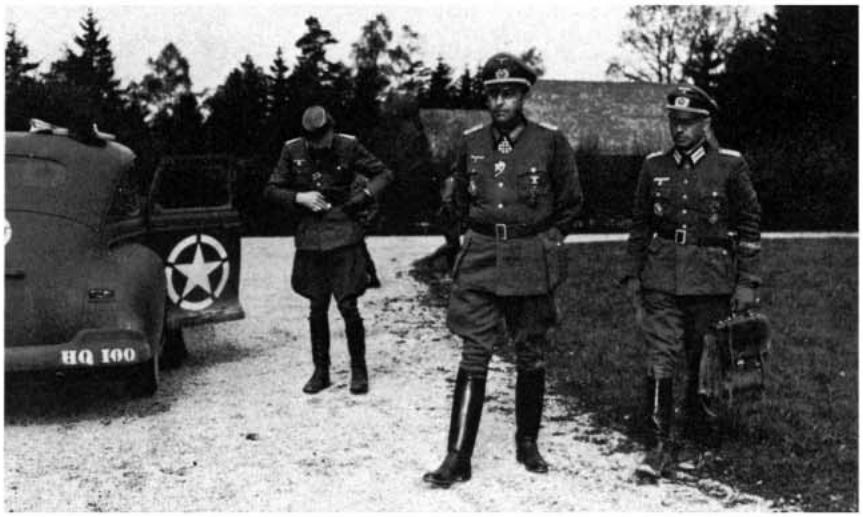


Baldham, Germany

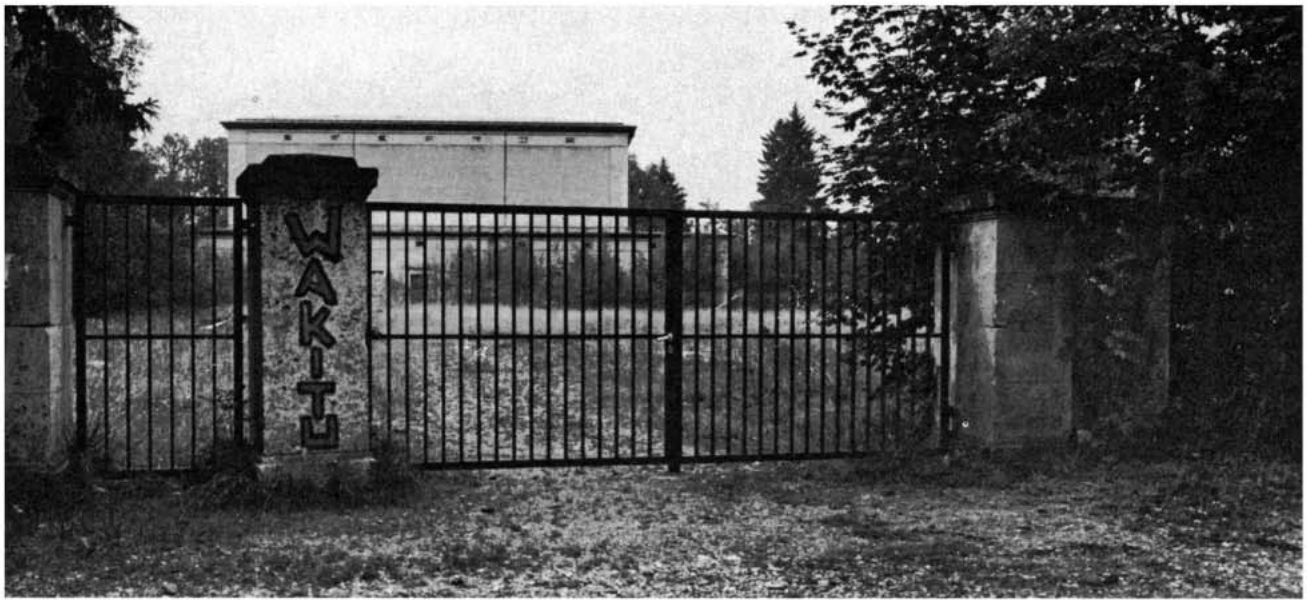
With the war in southern Germany and western Austria moving swiftly to a close, under Admiral Dönitz' authority to conclude a truce with the US 6th Army Group for the area between the Böhmer Wald and the upper Inn river, Generalfeldmarschall Kesselring notified SHAEF on May 4 of his readiness to send his Chief-of-Staff to Salzburg to discuss surrender terms. General Eisenhower declared that unless the offer included all enemy forces in Heeresgruppe Mitte, (Army Group Centre), Süd, E and G, and all outlying garrisons, and all forces facing the Red Army, the Germans should send their representative not to SHAEF but to the 6th Army Group. Accordingly, General Schulz, commander of Heeresgruppe G, sent forward a delegation headed by General der Infanterie Hermann Foertsch, commander of the 1. Armee.

On the night of May 4 the Germans approached US XV Corps positions whereupon the US 3rd Division commander, Major General John W. 'Iron Mike' O'Daniel, escorted the delegation to the imposing edifice, once the home of Josef Thorak, some twelve miles to the east of Munich, which had become XV Corps HQ. Negotiations began the following day and among those present, in

Above: **The entrance to the monolith built by Albert Speer for Josef Thorak at Baldham near Haar, and later taken over by XV Corps as their HQ. (US Army)** *Bottom:* **It took considerable effort on behalf of our intrepid 'JP' Pallud to get permission from the Bavarian state authorities to photograph in the grounds. Even then it was not possible to gain admittance to the interior of the house.**



General der Infanterie Hermann Foertsch arrives on the morning of May 5. (US Army)



The 'stars' arrive. Lieutenant General Jacob L. Devers, 6th Army Group CG, leads the way followed by (second row) L-R: Lieutenant General Patch, Seventh Army; Lieutentant General Haislip, XV Corps; Major General O'Daniel, 3rd Infantry Division; Brigadier General Edward S. Ott, XV Corps, and Brigadier General Reuben E. Jenkins, G-3 6th Army Group.

addition to Lieutenant General Jacob L. Devers, commander of the 6th Army Group, were Lieutenant General Alexander M. Patch of the Seventh Army and Major General Wade H. Haislip of the XV Corps.

Although General Foertsch made no objection to terms, he felt impelled to point out that even with the best of intentions, it would be difficult for the Germans to comply with some provisions in the time allowed. Such was the state of German communications, for example, that many hours might pass before all German troops received word of the surrender. He also asked if the Allies would hand over prisoners to the Russians.

With these points answered, usually non-committally, General Devers stated firmly that there was no offer of an armistice; it was simply unconditional surrender.

'Do you understand that?' he asked.

Foertsch stiffened. After nearly a minute, he responded.

'I can assure you, sir,' he said, 'that no power is left at my disposal to prevent it.'

At approximately 2.30 p.m. that afternoon representatives of both sides signed the terms which were to become effective at noon the next day, May 6.

The surrender affected all German troops between the eastern boundary of Heeresgruppe G near the Austro-Czech border and the western border of Switzerland, thus excluding General der Infanterie Hans von Obstfelder's 7. Armee in Czechoslovakia, which a week earlier had been subordinated directly to Ob.West, but including Brandenberger's 19. Armee and its shadow appendage, the 24. Armee.

As we have seen the 19. Armee had already concluded its own surrender at Innsbruck, and the men generally observed the earlier effective cease-fire. However, the same was not true of the 24. Armee, though only partially through the fault of the Germans. Representatives of the commander of the force, General der Infanterie Hans Schmidt, had approached the French at noon on May 4 with a request for terms of surrender, but before word could reach General de Lattre, the French commander received a request from the US 6th Army Group to send a parliamentary to VI Corps to treat with the 19. Armee. When General Schmidt's delegation reached General de Lattre's headquarters with word that Schmidt had authority to deal independently, de Lattre theorised that the French had been invited to participate in the 19. Armee's surrender because soldiers of that army faced both French and Americans but that he was free to negotiate alone with Schmidt since only French troops faced the 24. Armee.

By the time General Schmidt's emissaries returned from contacting the French, Schmidt had learned that Heeresgruppe G was surrendering to the 6th Army Group. Deciding against presenting himself to General de Lattre, Schmidt sent instead a letter noting the broader surrender and suggesting that the French get in touch on the matter with the 6th Army Group.

Shocked by the 'insolence' of Schmidt's letter, General de Lattre demanded that General Devers send on to him any plenipotentiaries from the 24. Armee who might approach American forces. He intended to continue hostilities, he said, until the moment German representatives presented themselves at his headquarters.

Above: **Hardly a group photo to be proud of: the Foertsch entourage line up in the driveway. (US Army)** *Below:* **The gravelled track can still be found beneath the weeds although a chain-link fence now bisects the front 'garden'.**

General Devers's Chief-of-Staff replied that Heeresgruppe G had surrendered in its entirety effective at noon on May 6, which included those forces opposing the French. Devers's orders were that all troops of the 6th Army Group must stop in place and cease fighting immediately, the word to be transmitted without delay to both Germans and French.

General de Lattre was not satisfied. If the 19. Armee as a part of Heeresgruppe G had surrendered individually with an effective hour different from that for the entire army group, then the same conditions should be applied, he reasoned, to the 24. Armee. Although Schmidt's command was attached as a subordinate unit to Brandenberger's, the General maintained that if the 24. Armee had been included in the surrender, it would have been mentioned by name. Defying the directive from Devers, de Lattre send a courier to General Brandenberger to demand that he send Schmidt to surrender to the French. In the meantime, he said, the French would continue to fight.

Hostilities ostensibly were continuing in the French sector when late on May 6 General Devers sent a liaison officer to explain to de Lattre how, even as negotiations had been underway with Brandenberger, a delegation from Heeresgruppe G had arrived to surrender the entire command. The General was still not to be placated and he pointed out that neither in the surrender of Heeresgruppe G nor of the 19. Armee had the 24. Armee been specifically mentioned. Besides, he maintained, not without logic, if the Germans on his front were included in Heeresgruppe G's surrender, then the First French Army should have been represented at the ceremony.

When the American liaison officer asked him at this point to sign his name to the surrender document, de Lattre refused on the grounds that General Charles de Gaulle had named him as an official representative of the French government to accept the overall German surrender and that a governmental representative should not affix his signature to an operational document originating in the field. In declining, he again demanded that General Schmidt be turned over to the French. General Devers refused.

There was no easy way out of the impasse and there the matter rested, with hostilities on the French front coming to an end from a combination of a lack of anybody to fight back and of the general overall German surrender.

Above: **The Americans remained firmly in their seats as the Germans were escorted into the room. Here General Foertsch introduces his team.** *Below:* **The deed is done yet the absence of any representative, be they signatory or witness, for France was to sow discord between the two Allies as Armeegruppe G faced both American and French forces. (US Army)**

Before the war, Josef Thorak's works of sculpture, greatly admired by Hitler, were used to dramatic effect in the architecture of the new Germany, masterminded by Albert Speer. Thorak's mansion, described by American historians as being located at Haar, near Munich, is in fact to be found on the Waldstrasse at Baldham further to the east and is constructed in the style typical of the buildings erected by Speer in Munich, Nuremberg and Berlin.

Today it is the property of the Bavarian government and the building is used for the storage of the stage scenery from the Munich Opera. The grounds are overgrown, and a new high fence cuts the area in two. There is a new gate at the rear while the front 'garden' appears to be used by the local town for a rubbish dump. All the statues which were to be seen in the house and grounds in 1945 have gone: those small enough were looted by American forces while others too large to move were dismembered or disfigured. It was not possible to enter and take photographs inside. Suffice it to say that no plaque or memorial records the historical significance of the house in May 1945.

The Hotel de Wereld in Wageningen was chosen by General Foulkes for the capitulation of the German occupation forces in Holland when he learned that its title meant 'The World'. Here the Kubelwagen carrying Generalleutnant Paul Reichelt stands on the corner of Rijksstraatweg and Grindweg, renamed in 1946 'Generaal Foulkesweg' and 'Bevrijdingsstraat' — Liberation Street. (Public Archives of Canada)

Wageningen, Netherlands

The scene now moves north to Holland where, on the morning of Saturday, May 5, preliminary discussions were arranged to take place at 11.00 a.m. in the Hotel De Wereld at Wageningen, ten miles west of Arnhem, for the surrender of all German forces in the Netherlands. At the appointed hour, the meeting began between Lieutenant-General Charles Foulkes, commander of the I Canadian Corps, and Generalleutnant Paul Reichelt, Chief-of-Staff to Generaloberst Johannes Blaskowitz, commander of the German 25. Armee. Also present, in his official capacity as Commander-in-Chief of the Netherlands Forces of the Interior, was Prince Bernhard. At this initial meeting, Reichelt was ordered to return to the hotel that same afternoon at four o'clock accompanied by Generaloberst Blaskowitz for the surrender proper.

At 4.00 p.m. exactly, two German army vehicles drove up with an escort of Royal Canadian Military Police outriders and an armoured car. In the second of these cars, a Kübelwagen, sat Blaskowitz. With him was his Chief-of-Staff Reichelt and an interpreter, together with an NCO to act as secretary. Next to Blaskowitz sat a Dutch officer, Major Borghouts, chief liaison officer for Prince Bernhard. He had been specially parachuted into western Holland to make contact with the Wehrmacht High Command.

The Allied delegation was already inside the hotel, having entered the bar lounge (where the surrender was to take place) through the sunroom on the east side of the building. In the bar, a long table, flanked by two rows of chairs, was in position. There were about thirty war correspondents present, representing five nations, the room being bathed in the floodlights of the cine cameramen.

As the Germans entered the bar, the Allied officers, who had been standing around in small groups chatting, fell silent and took their places on their side of the table. General Foulkes sat in the centre with his interpreter on his left and Prince Bernhard on his right. The German delegation remained standing at attention behind their chairs, until motioned to take their places by the General.

Foulkes began by presenting himself as representing the C-in-C of the First Canadian Army, and asked Generaloberst Blaskowitz if he was the commander of the entire German forces in Holland, to which Blaskowitz replied in the affirmative. Foulkes then queried as to why Artur von Seyss-Inquart, the Reich Commissar for the Low Countries, was not present. Generalleutnant Reichelt, after some hesitation, replied that he had left the country in a motor torpedo boat in order to make contact with Grossadmiral Dönitz. Reichelt also stated that 'he will definitely be returning' drawing from Foulkes the ironic witticism that he would 'give him a good welcome'.

Foulkes (his words being translated by the German interpreter to his officers) then said: 'The Commander-in-Chief [Montgomery] requires me to read the terms of surrender in English and then I would like you to read them to the General in German.'

Foulkes inquired as to whether Blaskowitz was in possession of a German copy of the terms, to which the latter replied 'Nein'.

Lieutenant-General Charles Foulkes, with HRH Prince Bernhard, awaits the arrival of Generalleutnant Reichelt before escorting him into the hotel through the sun room for the morning session. (Public Archives of Canada)

'Well, is the General prepared to accept my reading this and prepared to negotiate for turning his troops over to me?'

The Generaloberst replied simply: 'Jahwohl'.

Foulkes then pointed out that Prince Bernhard was present as Commander-in-Chief of the Netherlands Forces of the Interior, whereupon Blaskowitz asked Foulkes to point him out to him. When he did so, the Germans immediately jumped up from their chairs and stood to attention. Prince Bernhard did not respond and quietly lit a cigarette.

Having read the conditions of surrender, and making Generaloberst Blaskowitz personally responsible for their successful execution, Foulkes continued: 'Starting tomorrow, the 49th [British] Division will move into the LXXXVIII [German] Corps

Right: **The sun room, (a covered in verandah) has since been demolished: Margot Vanderveen 'guards' the memorial plaque unveiled by Prince Bernhard on July 1, 1945.**

On the afternoon of May 5 Generaloberst Johannes Blaskowitz, the C-in-C of the 25. Armee, rolled up in his Horch Kfz.21 Kommandeurwagen.

The two small bars in the background still remain much the same — now used as meeting places for students of the University.

area and take over control. As soon as the division is established in that area, I will issue orders for all German troops to go to the various assembly areas, which we shall discuss with your staff, and there they will be disarmed.'

Blaskowitz merely affirmed: 'Jawohl'.

At this point General Foulkes was of the opinion that a new document would have to be drawn up, as he wanted 'to get it all on one piece of paper'. As Wageningen had been decimated in the fighting to such an extent that a typewriter could not be found, and also because Blaskowitz asked for a little time to think about the matter, it was decided to postpone the actual signing ceremony until the following morning.

General Foulkes then left for his headquarters at Harskamp, and Generaloberst Blaskowitz for his at Hilversum. That evening, Her Majesty Queen Wilhelmina spoke to the Dutch people on the radio, from the free, southern part of Holland, and the following day, the definitive ceremony of capitulation took place in the auditorium of the University of Agriculture in Wageningen.

Wageningen lies close to the Dutch Grebbe defence line and the town was evacuated in May 1940 and largely destroyed in the fighting. After reconstruction, it was badly damaged again in 1944 after the townspeople were ordered out at the time of the Arnhem operation. For the next eight months the town was empty except for German troops. In 1945 it just lay within the liberated area and it was selected by General Foulkes as a convenient meeting place for the emergency food supply negotiations as German officers could reach the town without the likelihood of being molested by the Dutch population.

The Hotel de Wereld was repaired after the war and a capitulation museum was installed in the bar with the same table and chairs used at the surrender conference. This was terminated in 1962 and in 1970 the hotel closed with every likelihood of it being demolished. However the Government was persuaded to allocate funds for its restoration and, with additional contributions from the municipality, province and University of Agriculture (which then owned the building), the renovated surrender room was reopened by Prince Bernhard on May 5, 1975. When Bart Vanderveen visited the hotel for us in March 1985 to take our comparison photographs, he found work still in progress to restore the remainder of the building.

Although the plaque on the wall of the hotel specifies that 'in this building . . . Foulkes . . . accepted the unconditional surrender', the actual document was signed in the Aula (auditorium) of the University which still stands to the east of the Wereld.

Above: **Negotiations underway between General Foulkes and Generaloberst Blaskowitz in the lounge bar of the Wereld. (IWM)** *Below:* **Now used by the University for conferences of a different kind, the actual surrender table only being brought out on special occasions.**

On a traffic island, more of less mid-way between De Wereld and the University auditorium, and facing the food supply conference building, stands the National Liberation Monument. It comprises a bronze statue of a male person (executed by Mr J. Richters, an Amsterdam sculptor) and the stone pedestal displays Psalm 22, verses 22 and 23, as well as a specially written poem and also information about the fact that the Dutch Lt-Admiral Conrad E. L. Helfrich was present at the signing of the Japanese capitulation aboard the Missouri in the Bay of Tokyo on September 2, 1945. The monument was unveiled by Prince Bernhard on September 13, 1951.

Wageningen in a sense is unique in that the memorial plaque commemorating the surrender is not mounted on the building where it was actually signed. Blaskowitz leaves the University auditorium on May 6. At this point a Dutch journalist asked the German if he had anything to say to the Dutch population. The answer he gave was to his driver: 'Weg, schnell weg!' (Get away quick.) This was a very appropriate statement to the Dutch people!

Reims, France

Meanwhile, arrangements had been made for Generaladmiral von Friedeburg to proceed to SHAEF at Reims on May 5 to open negotiations for the surrender of the remaining forces in the west. The Germans still hoped to gain time in which to bring their troops facing the Russians into the western zone and, realising this, General Eisenhower cabled Moscow of his intention to inform the German emissaries that they must surrender all forces facing the Red Army to the Russians. General Alexei Antonov, Soviet Army Chief-of-Staff, replied, 'The Soviet Command does not object to the plan of surrender set forth in the letter in the event that Dönitz accepts the condition of simultaneous surrender to the Soviet forces of those German troops which face them. Major General Ivan Susloparoff [Russian liaison officer at SHAEF] is authorised to take part in the surrender negotiations with the representative of Dönitz since it is not possible to send other officers in view of the shortness of time.'

When proposals for surrender first began to be discussed at the end of April, the question arose as to the nature of the surrender terms to be used. Details of a surrender instrument had been worked out by the European Advisory Commission and approved by the representatives of the United States, Great Britain, and the USSR in late July 1944. The document had been sent to SHAEF, but it was apparently viewed as a draft and not as a final proposal. Several things intervened before May 1945 to confuse its status. One was the fact that when the French were invited to join the European Advisory Commission near the end of 1944 they asked that the protocol for the instrument of surrender be changed to include them as a signatory. This step was delayed until shortly before the final surrender. The second complicating factor came at the Yalta Conference when the three great powers, without informing France, added the word 'dismemberment' to provisions for complete disarmament and demobilisation as possible steps in the pacification of Germany. Although French representatives learned indirectly of the change, they had not been notified officially of the amendment at the beginning of the surrender negotiations. On May 1, 1945, the European Advisory Commission changed the protocol of the original surrender instrument to include France as a signatory, but did not make clear which set of surrender terms was to be used. When, therefore, SHAEF looked about for terms of capitulation to present to the Germans, it found not one set but two.

On May 4, Lieutenant General Walter Bedell Smith, Eisenhower's Chief-of-Staff, told John Winant, United States Ambassador to Great Britain and the US representative on the European Advisory Commission, that no authoritative copy of the surrender instrument had been sent to SHAEF by the Combined Chiefs-of-Staff nor had the four governments delegated SHAEF power to sign that instrument. The Ambassador agreed that the authority had not been given but said that copies of the documents prepared by the European Advisory Commission were available for SHAEF's use. On May 5, Mr Winant was notified that SHAEF had decided to use a briefer form of unconditional surrender which had been drawn up at that headquarters. SHAEF believed, the Ambassador gathered, that it could obtain an acknowledgment by the enemy of complete defeat with the least controversy and delay by this means. Both Winston Churchill and General Smith, to whom Winant appealed when he found that the new draft had omitted certain important points contained in the older document, assured the Ambassador that SHAEF's terms did not preclude the later use of the surrender instrument or declaration which the European Advisory Commission had drawn up. At the Ambassador's suggestion, Article Four was added to the SHAEF instrument to make that point clear. SHAEF received no other objections to the use of its draft, and this was the text of the document presented to the Germans for their signature at Reims.

General Eisenhower was informed on the evening of May 4 that German representatives would be flown to Reims from 21st Army Group headquarters the following morning. In preparation for the negotiations, he told General Smith that there would be no bargaining with the Germans and stipulated that he would not see them until after the surrender terms were signed. General Smith and Major-General Kenneth Strong, (head of SHAEF G-2 Division) who had handled the Italian surrender in 1943, were chosen to discuss terms with the Germans. To assure the Soviets that nothing underhand was being done, General Eisenhower gave instructions that General Susloparoff and Lieutenant Colonel Ivan Zenkovitch, his interpreter, be called to Supreme Headquarters before the Germans arrived.

In September 1944, Eisenhower had moved his advanced headquarters to the Reims area, and in February 1945 SHAEF Forward moved into the College Moderne et Technique de Garçons. Here a war room had been established in a room above the ground floor where the students had formerly played table tennis. Now that it was known that the Germans would be coming to Reims for the signing of the general surrender, preparations were set in motion for the momentous event.

'The sound and picture people arrived', wrote Captain Harry Butcher, Ike's naval

Although frequently referred to as 'the little red schoolhouse', this is a very belittling description of SHAEF headquarters in Reims. It may be constructed of red brick but it is certainly not little as the picture *above* shows. The aspect is looking up Rue Henri Joliaeur, now renamed Rue du President Franklin Roosevelt. The doorway near the corner is the one used by visitors to the war room today. The entrance used by the German delegation was the one further up the road, shown in the photograph at the top of the page taken in May 1945, but now the one reserved for the schoolchildren of the college. (Signal Corps)

Having been driven by car from Brussels, his aircraft being diverted by bad weather at Reims, it was still raining when Generaladmiral von Friedeburg arrived, somewhat jaded, at SHAEF. He was accompanied by Oberst Poleck, the fifth man at Lüneburg, see page 12.

aide, in his diary, 'and I got them cleared past the guard into the war room and arranged to let them come and go, which was something of a triumph. The war room, where Ike generally has met with his top commanders and staff each morning at 9, is now strewn with cables, camera equipment and batteries of klieg lights. The photographers generally take command wherever they go into action and they had pushed a huge table, normally in the centre of the room, to a far corner to permit more coverage for their lenses. The room is about thirty feet square and has pale blue walls covered with battle maps showing the disposition of the forces on all fronts. There are charts showing the current day's air operations, casualty lists, records of supplies landed, railway and communications systems, and today's, tomorrow's, and the next day's weather — a series of charts that I have noticed always draws first attention of those entering the room. On one wall there was a thermometer, mounted on a background of swastikas, showing the mounting millions of German prisoners in Allied hands.'

Bad weather on the morning of May 5 prevented the aircraft carrying General-admiral von Friedeburg and Oberst Poleck from landing at Reims and instead they had to be flown to Brussels and driven the 125 miles by car to Supreme Headquarters. Shortly after 5.00 p.m. the Germans reached the school and were taken to General Smith's office. On coming before the SHAEF Chief-of-Staff, von Friedeburg proposed to surrender the remaining German forces on the Western Front. General Smith informed him of General Eisenhower's refusal to continue discussions unless the Eastern Front was also included in the surrender offer. To make clear the hopelessness of the enemy situation, the SHAEF Chief-of-Staff displayed maps of the existing enemy situation as well as special maps on which some imaginary attacks had been projected. Von Friedeburg was impressed, but he declared that he lacked authority to surrender on both fronts.

A signal was sent to Dönitz on behalf of von Friedeburg, via British Second Army which had the nearest Allied HQ to Flensburg, to ask that he be given permission to sign an unconditional and simultaneous surrender in all theatres of operations or that the chief of OKW and the commanders of the air and naval forces be sent to Reims for that purpose. As there would be a delay while the message was decoded and taken to the German HQ by courier, the Germans were accommodated overnight at No. 3 Place Godinot, a building which had been requisitioned to provide overnight accommodation for officers visiting SHAEF. The reply from Dönitz came the next day, Sunday, May 6, to the effect that the chief of OKW operations staff, Generaloberst Alfred Jodl, would be flying to Reims accompanied by his aide, Major Wilhelm Oxenius. Shortly after 6.00 p.m. they reached SHAEF.

After having been briefed by von Friedeburg, Jodl entered into explanations as to why an overall capitulation was impossible. After an hour of negotiations, General Smith reported to Eisenhower that he thought the Germans were stalling for time, as every hour the surrender was delayed, more forces on the Eastern Front could be withdrawn. The Supreme Commander's reply was terse and to the point: either the Germans speedily agreed to the terms of the surrender or he would break off all negotiations and seal the Western Front preventing by force any further westward movement of German soldiers and civilians.

Jodl, faced with this ultimatum, signalled direct to Dönitz for authority to make a final and complete surrender. Shortly after midnight the reply came: full power to sign in accordance with conditions as given.

Earlier in the day General Smith had personally charged Captain Butcher with the custody of the two pens to be used at the ceremony, and to ensure that no one stole them. 'I examined the pens', wrote Butcher, 'one of which Beetle [Bedell Smith] said was pure gold and the other gold-plated. I knew they had been sent to General Ike by an old friend he met in the Philippines many years ago, Kenneth Parker, who months ago had requested that when and if the peace was signed, these pens be used. However, he had made the stipulation that one be sent to him. . . . General Ike told me to hang on to the fountain pens for dear life because he had promised to send one to his old friend Parker, and had in mind giving the solid gold one to the President. I asked him how he would take care of the Prime Minister, for, after all, he is an Allied Commander.

Left: **While awaiting the arrival of Jodl, von Friedeburg and Poleck were quartered in this house, No. 3 Place Godinot. (US Army)** *Right:* **Almost as if time has stood still — except that is for the ubiquitous parking meter!**

HERE, ON 4TH MAY 1945, A DELEGATION
FROM THE GERMAN HIGH COMMAND
SURRENDERED UNCONDITIONALLY
TO FIELD-MARSHAL MONTGOMERY
ALL LAND, SEA AND AIR FORCES
IN NORTH-WEST GERMANY, DENMARK
AND HOLLAND.

Left: **Accompanied by Major Wilhelm Oxenius, Generaloberst Alfred Jodl arrives at the main entrance late Sunday afternoon. (US Army)** *Right:* **The steel-framed glass doorway remains unchanged as does the black and white tiled hallway.**

' "Oh, Lord, I hadn't thought of that," replied Eisenhower.'

Captain Butcher's account goes on to explain what happened next and how he got over the problem of the pens: 'About 1.30 this morning I was called to the phone. It was Ruth Briggs [General Smith's secretary]. She said: "The big party is on," that General Ike already had arrived, and that I, as custodian of the fountain pens, should hurry over to the headquarters. "How could the war be ended without the pens?" she jibed.

'At the front door there was a hornet's nest of correspondents waiting to get into the school building. If I had good sense, or had seen them first, I would have driven around the schoolhouse into the courtyard and sneaked into the offices the back way. They

Hauptquartier, den 6. Mai 1945.

Ich bevollmächtige Generaloberst J o d l ,
Chef des Wehrmachtführungsstabes im Oberkommando der Wehrmacht, zum Abschluss eines Waffenstill-standsabkommens mit dem Hauptquartier des Generals
E i s e n h o w e r .

Großadmiral.

Jodl came armed with this authorisation but note that Dönitz by using the terminology 'Waffenstillstand' was still hoping for an armistice rather than acceding to outright surrender.

Barely a glance for von Friedeburg as the OKW Chief of Operations is shown the way by Major General Kenneth Strong, SHAEF G-2. (Signal Corps)

The SHAEF War Room was located on the first floor of a former recreation room overlooking the inner courtyard of the school.

had driven up from Paris on the chance that they would be permitted to cover the ceremony, despite the fact that a pool of seventeen already was on hand for the job. I respected their enterprise, but from the standpoint of scores of correspondents who had stayed in Paris and not driven to Reims on the understanding that they would not be allowed into the ceremony, there wasn't much that could be done for them, despite my normal desire to be as helpful as possible. Standing on the steps, I hurriedly briefed them on events of the two days and told them I would immediately seek General Allen and get him to deal with them direct.

'I found General Allen with General Bull, trying to work out details of the procedure for complying with the order of the Combined Chiefs-of-Staff that announcement of the end of the campaign was to be made simultaneously at a later date by the governments at Washington, Moscow, and London. I gave General Allen the message, but the harassed General could do little about it.

'I was about to miss the big show myself, so hurried around to the war room, where I found the Russian officers, General Spaatz, General Morgan, Admiral Burrough, Air Marshal Robb, and General Sevez already gathered and waiting. General Bull followed me in.

'Beetle arrived, looked over the seating arrangements, spoke briefly as to procedure. He didn't seem to notice the one lonely microphone upon which the whole world was dependent. He blinked in the floodlights. . . .

'General Jodl, Admiral Friedeburg, the two principals, arrived, escorted by General Strong and Brigadier Foord. General Strong placed the documents for signature in front of General Smith, before whom I laid the solid gold fountain pen. Beetle spoke briefly to the Germans, which was interpreted for them by Strong. It was merely that the surrender documents awaited signature. Were they ready and prepared to sign? Jodl indicated assent with a slight nod. I already had before him the gold plated pen. Jodl had two documents to sign, so when he finished the first, I retrieved the gold-plated pen and substituted my own — one given me by Charlie Daly in Algiers. With this he signed the second document.

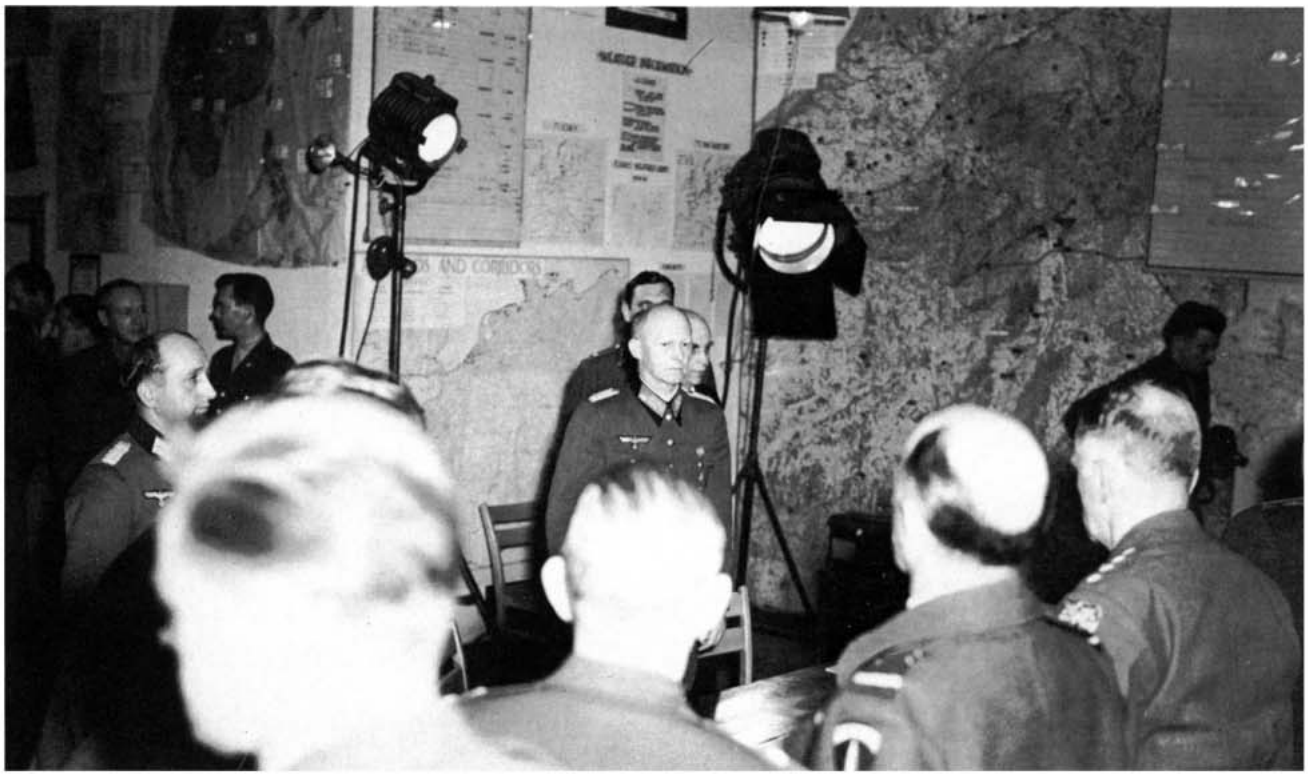
'Generals Smith, Susloparov, and Sevez [representing the absent French Chief-of-Staff] then signed both documents. At the conclusion of the signing, General Jodl stood at attention, addressed General Smith, and said, in English:

' "I want to say a word." Then he lapsed into German, later interpreted as: "General! With this signature the German people and German armed forces are for better or worse delivered into the victor's hands. In this war, which has lasted more than five years, both have achieved and suffered more than perhaps any other people in the world. In this hour I can only express the hope that the victor will treat them with generosity."

'The official time of the signature on the surrender document was 2.41 a.m. British Double Summer Time.

'I had three pens, and Ike, if he chose, could now send the gold ones to the President and Prime Minister, and mine to Mr Parker. The only trouble was that mine is a Sheaffer.

'The delegates arose and the Germans were taken to the room assigned them and the remainder went to General Ike's office. He



The German delegation — Major Wilhelm Oxenius, aide to Generaloberst Alfred Jodl, partly obscuring Generaladmiral von Friedeburg — enters the war room to be greeted by the harsh glare of the camera lights . . . and in direct contrast to the reception meted out at Baldham (page 19), the Allied dignitaries stand. (Signal Corps)

The players are assembled, the scene is set . . . and Captain Butcher hovers in the background on pen detail. The Allied delegation is from L-R: Lieutenant General Sir Frederick Morgan, Deputy Chief-of-Staff, (not to be confused with the General Morgan at Caserta on page 8); General François Sevez, representing General Alphonse Juin, Chief-of-Staff to General de Gaulle; Admiral Harold M. Burrough, C-in-C Allied Naval Expeditionary Forces; Lieutenant General 'Beetle' Smith, SHAEF Chief-of-Staff; Major General Ivan Susloparoff, Russian liaison officer at SHAEF with Lieutenant Ivan Chermiaev behind; General Carl Spaatz, C-in-C US Strategic Air Forces; Air Marshal Sir James M. Robb, Deputy Chief-of-Staff (Air); Major General Harold R. Bull, Assistant Chief-of-Staff G-3; and Lieutenant Ivan Zenkovitch, interpreter. The empty seat next to General Smith was for General Strong who, in the event, stood behind the Germans as interpreter. (Signal Corps)

Only this text in English is authoritative

ACT OF MILITARY SURRENDER

1. We the undersigned, acting by authority of the German High Command, hereby surrender unconditionally to the Supreme Commander, Allied Expeditionary Force and simultaneously to the Soviet High Command all forces on land, sea, and in the air who are at this date under German control.

2. The German High Command will at once issue orders to all German military, naval and air authorities and to all forces under German control to cease active operations at 2301 hours Central European time on 8 May and to remain in the positions occupied at that time. No ship, vessel, or aircraft is to be scuttled, or any damage done to their hull, machinery or equipment.

3. The German High Command will at once issue to the appropriate commanders, and ensure the carrying out of any further orders issued by the Supreme Commander, Allied Expeditionary Force and by the Soviet High Command.

4. This act of military surrender is without prejudice to, and will be superseded by any general instrument of surrender imposed by, or on behalf of the United Nations and applicable to GERMANY and the German armed forces as a whole.

5. In the event of the German High Command or any of the forces under their control failing to act in accordance with this Act of Surrender, the Supreme Commander, Allied Expeditionary Force and the Soviet High Command will take such punitive or other action as they deem appropriate.

Signed at Rheims at 0241 on the 7th day of May, 1945.
France

On behalf of the German High Command.

IN THE PRESENCE OF

On behalf of the Supreme Commander, Allied Expeditionary Force.

On behalf of the Soviet High Command.

-2-

Major General, French Army
(Illegible)

The Act of Military Surrender, seen here being signed by 'Beetle' with the gold pen, was not the only document to be signed at Reims. Jodl also completed an undertaking for the heads of the German army, navy and air forces to appear for a formal ratification of the unconditional surrender at a later date. A second order signed by the SHAEF Chief-of-Staff covered orders to the German army and air forces in Norway and the Channel Islands, and by far the longest document is that seen in front of Admiral Burrough giving a series of instructions to German naval forces. Jodl's order from Dönitz authorising him to sign the surrender (reproduced on page 28) can be seen lying on the table to the right. (Signal Corps)

In actual fact Major General Susloparov was only authorised to take part in the negotiations and was not empowered to sign any agreement on behalf of the Soviet High Command! Thus a further signing ceremony had to be arranged the following day in Berlin to allay any impression that Dönitz had achieved the separate surrender to British and American forces that he had sought. (Signal Corps)

As it was the Reims document, seen here being signed for France by Major General Sevez, gave the Germans a breathing space of more than forty-four hours before it was due to come into effect: from 0241 on May 7 to 2301 on May 8. This was a considerable concession by SHAEF and one that allowed the Germans to move more forces westwards into the hands of the Western Allies. (Signal Corps)

General Eisenhower had refused to meet with the German delegation until after they had signed the surrender and he ordered General Smith to sign on his behalf, possibly because he would have outranked his German opposite number. Had Generalfeldmarschall Keitel attended it may well have changed his mind. This happy picture shows Ike displaying the two gold pens for the Press. Captain Butcher, behind him, still looks a worried man. (Signal Corps)

sternly asked the Germans if they fully understood the terms and whether they were prepared to execute them. This was interpreted by General Strong. The answer was made in the affirmative; the Germans bowed stiffly and left the room.

'The photographers wanted more pictures. General Ike called all of us to surround him. Someone asked that he hold the fountain pens. He displayed them in a "V for Victory", the pictures were snapped, and congratulations said all around.

'But Ike's work wasn't finished. He still had to make a short newsreel and radio recording. Taking the Air Chief Marshal [Tedder] with him to the war room, so both Allies would be shown together, General Ike spoke briefly "from the cuff". He had to make one retake after I butted in. He had used the word "armistice" and I was apprehensive that this term, which to me connoted all the laxity and unpreparedness of the period between the two wars was a bad one to use. Growling and scowling at me he substitued "surrender". '

At 3.24 a.m. General Eisenhower cabled the Combined Chiefs-of-Staff: 'The mission of this Allied Force was fulfilled at 0241, local time, May 7, 1945, Eisenhower'. He followed this with an official notification to the Soviet high command, emphasizing the agreement of the Germans to send representatives to a place chosen by General Eisenhower and the Soviets to execute a formal ratification.

When SHAEF relinquished tenure of the college on its transfer to Frankfurt, the war room was preserved and presented to the town of Reims on July 7, 1945 and the maps and charts which had been removed were replaced in their original positions.

Ten years ago when we visited Reims on our 30th anniversary tour of the surrender locations, little had been done to change the appearance of the war room except to add a wooden railing in front of the table, still in the corner of the room where the photographers had pushed it in 1945. However ten years later, in anticipation of the increased numbers of visitors to Reims for the 40th anniversary, alterations have been made destroying some of the originality of the building. Today the visitor enters through a different door to the one used in 1945 and lifts have been installed. When our photographs were taken in March 1985 building materials lay everywhere and it was due to the kindness of the curator, Monsieur François Pomarède of the Musée St Denis, that the war room was cleared to enable a picture to be taken.

The Press Conference. Ike looks now somewhat miffed, having just been told off by Captain Butcher for referring to the 'surrender' as an 'armistice'. When Eisenhower was appointed the combined Commanding General of US Forces in the European Theater, the C-in-C of US Forces of Occupation in Germany and the US representative on the Allied Control Council, Air Chief Marshal Tedder became Acting Supreme Commander. (Signal Corps)

The former German Army Engineering School, undamaged during the battle and now Soviet High Command HQ in East Berlin: scene of the ratification. (US Army)

Berlin, Germany

While General Eisenhower had kept the Soviet representative at SHAEF, Major General Susloparoff, fully informed of the negotiations at Reims, the Supreme Commander also made sure that Moscow was advised of developments. However, because it was the weekend of the Russian Easter, no direct contact could be made with authorised members of the Red Army General Staff who were said to be absent in the country. Ike's message, relayed to Soviet liaison representatives in Moscow by members of the Allied military missions, asked if the Soviets wished to add to or modify the demands which had been presented to the Germans at Reims. Further, General Eisenhower asked whether they desired 'the formality of signing to be repeated before any other Russian representatives' at any other place they might care to designate, and whether they wished to participate in the more formal ratification meeting to follow. The delay in making contact with the Russian leadership meant that General Antonov's reply was not received by SHAEF until after the signing had taken place at Reims.

In answering General Eisenhower's telegram, General Antonov declared that Dönitz, despite his offers to surrender, was still ordering German troops to fight against Soviet forces in the east. The note called attention to changes in the language of the proposed instrument of surrender which had been made at Reims before the final signing. (In wiring Moscow on May 6, General Eisenhower had spoken of a truce, a term deleted several hours later when the Germans agreed to unconditional surrender.) Another Soviet request — for the enemy to send emissaries to ratify the terms of surrender — had already been complied with. The USSR also asked that certain phrases from the European Advisory Commission draft be added. Finally, General Antonov, asked that the signing of the act of military surrender take place in Berlin and indicated that Marshal Georgi Zhukov would represent the Red Army.

The Soviet reply, dated May 6 but not handed to Major General John R. Deane (head of the US Military Mission in Moscow) for transmittal until May 7, declared that the Soviets desired only one signing of the document and did not concur with the suggestion that preliminary signing be held with General Susloparoff representing the Russians. General Deane and Admiral E. R. Archer (head of the British Military Mission) expressed the belief that General Eisenhower would not agree to any delays which would unnecessarily risk the loss of more lives. They might have added that any delay granted the Germans would have helped them in their desire to remove troops from the Soviet front.

General Eisenhower quickly replied that the Western powers had adhered scrupulously to their agreement of no separate truce. Eisenhower said that while a brief instrument of surrender had been signed at Reims before the arrival of the Russian note, provision had been made for the representatives of the German high command to report for a more formal signing. He indicated his willingness to go to Berlin on May 8 at a time specified by Marshal Zhukov for this ceremony, but added that if bad weather prevented his arrival the British and US heads of the missions in Moscow were to go to Berlin to represent him.

General Eisenhower's initial intention to go to Berlin was questioned by some members of his staff who saw no necessity of repeating the signing. When the Prime Minister also raised objections, the Supreme Commander appointed as his representative his deputy, Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Tedder, who was accompanied by a delegation that included General Carl Spaatz, commander of United States Strategic Air Forces in Europe, Major General Strong of G-2, Major General Harold R. Bull, SHAEF G-3, General de Lattre de Tassigny of the First French Army, and Admiral Harold Burrough, Allied Naval Commander-in-Chief. General Deane and Admiral Archer travelled from Moscow to sign for the Supreme Commander if his party was unable to arrive. The German representatives were the chief of the OKW Generalfeldmarschall Wilhelm Keitel, Generaladmiral von Freideburg, and head of the Luftwaffe, Generaloberst Hans Jürgen Stumpff.

The parties from the west arrived in Berlin before noon and were taken to the grounds of the Military Engineering College at Karlshorst, a suburb to the east of the city's centre. A meeting between Tedder and the Russians was delayed until four in the afternoon since Zhukov had to wait for the arrival of Stalin's representative, Andrei Y. Vishinsky, from Moscow before starting discussions.

Even before the formal meeting, difficulties arose over the matter of protocol. General de Lattre had discovered shortly after his arrival that the French flag had been omitted from the group displayed in the surrender hall and demanded that one be added. Since no French flag was available, the Russians made one, erring initially in designing a Dutch instead of a French one. The proper flag was ultimately completed in time for the final ceremony. Another matter, that of the signing of the actual surrender document, was not so easily arranged. General de Gaulle, in directing General de Lattre to sign for France, had said that he would sign as a witness in case the document was signed by General Eisenhower. If the Supreme Commander was not present, then de Lattre was to insist on being treated in the same way as the British representative, unless the latter signed in the place of General Eisenhower (which Tedder, as Deputy Supreme Commander, was to do). General de Lattre, on explaining his instructions to Tedder during the afternoon, was told that he and General Spaatz would sign as witnesses — a proposal to which Zhukov apparently agreed. The arrangement was upset, however, when Vishinsky arrived and said that de Lattre could sign, since his signature would

publicly acknowledge the resurrection of France, but that Spaatz could not participate inasmuch as Air Chief Marshal Tedder represented both the American and British forces. General Spaatz insisted on signing if the French general was included, while

Above: **Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Tedder, former AOC Middle East and Allied Air Commander Mediterranean, was appointed Deputy Supreme Commander on January 17, 1944. He took General Eisenhower's place in Berlin partly because the Soviet plenary representative, Marshal Georgi Zhukov was a group commander, well below Ike in rank. (US Army)** *Below:* **A memorial, T-34 and a plaque on the building records its role in history. (Allgemeiner Deutsche Nachrichtendienst)**

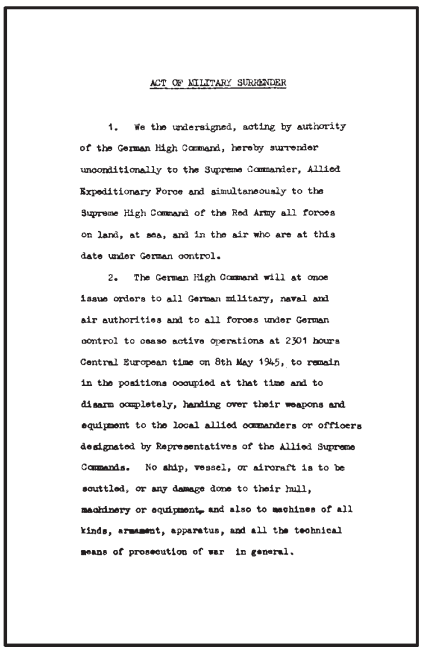
Disdain, contempt, arrogance — all these words have been used by historians to describe Generalfeldmarschall Keitel's attitude at the ceremony, perfectly captured here by a Signal Corps photographer. On his left the redoubtable von Friedeburg on his third appearance in four days and a new face: Generaloberst Hans Jürgen Stumpff, head of the Luftwaffe. With Hitler dead, Keitel was representing both the OKW and the Heer, there being then no separate army commander.

General de Lattre stood on his instructions and declared that if he went back to France without having signed the capitulation of the Reich he would deserve to hang. Tedder promised to support his right to sign and returned to argue the matter with the Soviets.

For several hours the question was debated, Zhukov holding there was no logical need for the witnesses. Tedder replied that it was not a matter of logic but that there had to be a name to represent 40 million Frenchmen and another name to represent 140 million Americans. He added that SHAEF had to represent three flags while the Russians had to consider only one. Near the end of the discussion, when Vishinsky looked at his watch, Tedder took advantage of the situation to say, 'Yes, we aren't getting any vodka and food are we?' The Russian representative left the room shortly afterwards and returned with a suggestion that the names of the witnesses be placed on a slightly lower line than those of the principals. This arrangement, promptly accepted, ended a discussion which had lasted from the afternoon until nearly midnight.

With the settlement of the matter of protocol, the representatives of the Western powers and the USSR were ready to receive the Germans. The Act of Military Surrender to be presented to the Germans differed from that signed at Reims in only a few particulars, and these had been settled fairly quickly during the afternoon.

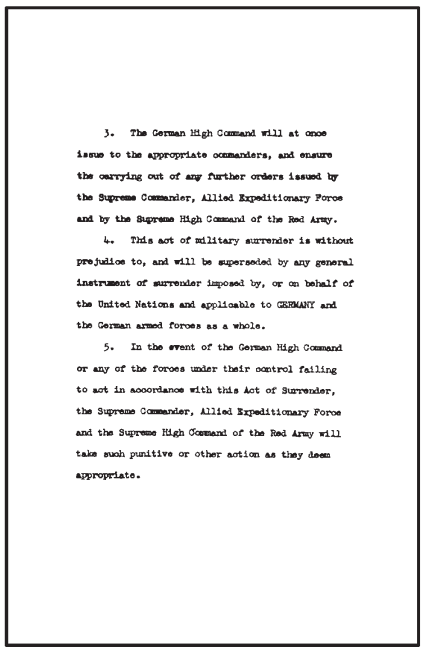
In preparation for the final signing, the representatives of the victorious armies approached their places at the main table. Marshal Zhukov sat in the centre, placing Air Chief Marshal Tedder to his immediate left. General Spaatz and then General de Lattre



ACT OF MILITARY SURRENDER

1. We the undersigned, acting by authority of the German High Command, hereby surrender unconditionally to the Supreme Commander, Allied Expeditionary Force and simultaneously to the Supreme High Command of the Red Army all forces on land, at sea, and in the air who are at this date under German control.

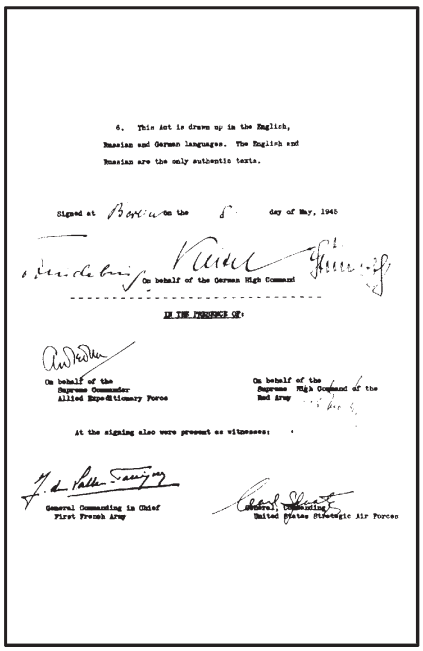
2. The German High Command will at once issue orders to all German military, naval and air authorities and to all forces under German control to cease active operations at 2301 hours Central European time on 8th May 1945, to remain in the positions occupied at that time and to disarm completely, handing over their weapons and equipment to the local allied commanders or officers designated by Representatives of the Allied Supreme Commands. No ship, vessel, or aircraft is to be scuttled, or any damage done to their hull, machinery or equipment, and also to machines of all kinds, armament, apparatus, and all the technical means of prosecution of war in general.



3. The German High Command will at once issue to the appropriate commanders, and ensure the carrying out of any further orders issued by the Supreme Commander, Allied Expeditionary Force and by the Supreme High Command of the Red Army.

4. This act of military surrender is without prejudice to, and will be superseded by any general instrument of surrender imposed by, or on behalf of the United Nations and applicable to GERMANY and the German armed forces as a whole.

5. In the event of the German High Command or any of the forces under their control failing to act in accordance with this Act of Surrender, the Supreme Commander, Allied Expeditionary Force and the Supreme High Command of the Red Army will take such punitive or other action as they deem appropriate.



6. This Act is drawn up in the English, Russian and German languages. The English and Russian are the only authentic texts.

Signed at Berlin on the 8th day of May, 1945

On behalf of the German High Command

IN THE PRESENCE OF:

On behalf of the Supreme Commander Allied Expeditionary Force

On behalf of the Supreme High Command of the Red Army

At the signing also were present as witnesses:

General Commanding in Chief First French Army

General, Commanding United States Strategic Air Forces

sat at Tedder's left. When Admiral Burrough started to take the seat at Zhukov's right, he found it taken by someone he did not recognise. It was Vishinsky, at whose right the Admiral sat during the ceremonies.

It was after 11.00 p.m. when Marshal Zhukov called the meeting to order and asked that the German representatives be brought in. Generalfeldmarschall Keitel, Admiral von Friedeburg, and Generaloberst Stumpff, together with their aides, now came forward and were questioned as to their understanding of the document and their powers to capitulate. Air Chief Marshal Tedder then asked if they were ready to sign. On answering that they were, they were handed copies of the Act of Military Surrender. General de Lattre noted with pleasure the change in seating which placed him just at Keitel's elbow when the field-marshal wrote his name. When the Germans completed signing at approximately 11.30 p.m., Marshal Zhukov and Air Marshal Tedder added their names on behalf of their respective commands, and General Spaatz and de Lattre were called forward to sign as witnesses. A humdrum touch was added when it appeared that despite the long dispute over their right to sign, neither had a pen!

The ceremony was completed at approximately 11.45 p.m., and Marshal Zhukov gave orders for the Germans to depart. Keitel, bemonocled and carrying his marshal's baton, strode out of the hall, keeping the air of arrogance which had unfavourably impressed the delegations throughout the proceedings.

Clifford Webb of the Daily Herald was present at the ceremony and wrote that it 'was probably the most uproarious surrender scene in history'. As Keitel entered the room 'the eager crowd of Russian photographers could contain their enthusiasm no longer. They surged forward until they all but engulfed the top table, pushing and struggling among themselves to thrust their cameras within inches of Keitel's furious face while he signed. Reporters stood on chairs until other reporters pushed them off. . . . The signings complete, the documents were carefully stored away in blue folders, and everybody repaired to the largest ante-room for conversation and beer. Marshal Zhukov among them. Meanwhile, a small crowd of waitresses descended on the conference room, whipped away pens, pencils, papers, and all the paraphernalia of surrender, and swiftly transformed the room into a banqueting hall. And then a full five hours of eating, drinking, toasting and music. Marshal Zhukov became more and more smilingly expansive as the night wore on, and the top table quickly became the scene of much back-slapping, hand shaking, and general good humour, with all the other tables following suit.'

Today May 9 is Victory Day in the Soviet Union. The military academy in Berlin is now preserved as 'Gedenkstätte Berlin-Karlshorst' with the addition outside of a T-34 tank on a plinth next to a memorial bas relief, and the chamber used for the signing ceremony is kept as it was in 1945 as a tourist attraction.

Keitel was indicted at Nuremburg, found guilty of waging a war of aggression, violation of the laws of war and crimes against humanity, and executed on October 16, 1946. *Above:* **Photographic pandemonium — pictured by a Russian cameraman.** *Below:* **The room in which history was made: the end of the Second World War in Europe. (Allgemeiner Deutsche Nachrichtendienst)**

HMS Bulldog on which Generalmajor Siegfried Heine signed in Guernsey. (IWM)

The Channel Islands

The Channel Islands — Jersey, Guernsey, Alderney and Sark — lying just a few miles west of the Cherbourg peninsula, had been abandoned by the British government in June 1940 as untenable once the coastline of France had fallen into German hands. The three largest islands were fortified with guns ranging up to 12-inches in calibre making any frontal assault suicidal. As a result no attempt was made by the Allies to re-capture them and the Islands became an isolated backwater once the conquering armies turned east across France towards Germany.

In May 1945 the commander of the Channel Islands — the Befehlshaber der britische Kanalinseln — was Vizeadmiral Friedrich Hüffmeier with his headquarters on Guernsey. On May 3 the Allies transmitted a wireless message asking him if he was ready to surrender: his reply, sent on the evening of May 6, pointed out that, ' . . . the Commander-in-Chief Channel Islands receives orders only from his own Government'.

When the overall unconditional surrender of all German forces was signed at Reims at 2.41 a.m. on the morning of May 7 it specified that all hostilities were to cease at midnight on May 8. However, as it was feared by the Allies that Vizeadmiral Hüffmeier might not have received this news, a further signal was sent asking him to send envoys to rendezvous at sea four miles south of Guernsey's Les Hanois lighthouse (two miles off the south-eastern corner of the island). The Vizeadmiral replied that as he had now received the necessary authority from Germany, his representative would be at the designated location at noon on May 8.

For months the Allies had prepared contingency plans for the liberation of the Islands, though the operation, codenamed NESTEGG, was dependent on a peaceful takeover, there being no thought of taking the Islands by force of arms. A special task force, No. 135, under Brigadier Alfred Snow (with an attached Civil Affairs Unit) had been detailed for NESTEGG and the Force Commander left Plymouth on HMS *Bulldog* accompanied by HMS *Beagle* to rendezvous with the Germans. The Vizeadmiral's representative was Kapitänleutnant Armin Zimmermann who was transported to the *Bulldog* by rubber dinghy from his minesweeping trawler. He told Brigadier Snow that he merely had instructions to take the 'armistice' terms back to his chief. The Brigadier pointed out that the meeting had been arranged to accept the immediate and unconditional surrender of the German forces and that if he was not empowered to sign, then someone who could must return by the midnight deadline. The German agreed but arrogantly warned the Brigadier to move away from the coast otherwise this would be construed as an invitation to open fire. Astounded by Zimmermann's effrontery, Brigadier Snow is reported to have replied: 'Tell Admiral Hüffmeier that if he opens fire on us we will hang him tomorrow!'

It was after midnight when he returned with Generalmajor Siegfried Heine, Chief-of-Staff to Hüffmeier and commander of the occupying army on Guernsey. However, as the overall 'Reims' surrender was now in force, Brigadier Snow decided to steam into Guernsey's main harbour, St Peter Port, forthwith, and at 7.14 a.m. on May 9 the surrender was signed on the quarterdeck of the *Bulldog*.

When Operation NESTEGG was being planned by the Allies for the capture and rehabilitation of the Islands, due consideration was given to the centuries-old traditional rivalry between Jersey and Guernsey. Therefore, although theoretically the entire Channel Islands could have been covered in one instrument of surrender, individual documents were prepared which could be signed in both Jersey and Guernsey by the respective Inselkommandanten.

Following the ceremony in St Peter Port harbour, Brigadier Snow transhipped to HMS *Beagle* for the short sea crossing to Jersey. A telephone call was put in to Bailiff Alexander Coutanche, the head of the civil adminstration, warning him that the *Beagle* was on its way and to get Generalmajor Rudolf Wulf, the Festungs Kommandant and also commander of the 319. Infanterie-Division, down to St Helier harbour.

When the Bailiff arrived at the naval headquarters situated in the Pomme d'Or Hotel, the German general insisted on being accompanied by two of his staff officers. Not to be outdone, the Bailiff said in that case he must also be accompanied by his Attorney-General and Solicitor-General. Meanwhile the *Beagle* had rounded Noirmont Point on the south coast at 10.00 a.m. and had anchored off St Helier with Brigadier Snow annoyed to find the German general not awaiting his pleasure. Unaware of the reason for the delay, impatiently he sent a message ashore that Wulf must be found immediately. In the end it was after midday when the Bailiff and the German Kommandant, accompanied by their prospective staffs, were taken out to the *Beagle* by launch where the surrender documents were signed.

Kapitänleutnant Armin Zimmermann was Vizeadmiral Hüffmeier's emissary. Here Brigadier Snow (second from left) appears not to be amused having been warned to move his ship away from the coast otherwise the shore batteries would open fire. He soon sent the German packing with a flea in his ear! (Signal Corps)

Generalmajor Heine has his credentials checked as he boards the ship in the early hours of May 9. The same, unfortunately unnamed, intelligence officer can be seen behind Brigadier Snow in the picture on the opposite page. (Signal Corps)

With both 'surrender' ships scrapped, this is the only 'memorial' to the signing ceremony — the Guernsey rum cask!

Both the Beagle, on which the Jersey surrender was signed, and the Bulldog were Acasta class 1,360-ton destroyers launched in 1930. After their brief moment of triumph in May 1945 both were soon sent to the breakers yard for scrapping. The Bulldog's bell was saved and is now displayed in the German Occupation Museum in Castle Cornet, Guernsey, as is the rum cask on which the surrender document for that island was signed.

Today the names of Bulldog and Beagle are borne by a new class of vessel, the 800-ton Bulldog class coastal survey ships commissioned in 1968. This year for the 40th anniversary the new HMS Beagle will return in the company of HMS Jersey and Penelope for the Islands' week-long liberation celebrations. It is also hoped that many men of Task Force 135 will also return for the parade on Liberation Day, May 9.

It is still dark outside as Zimmermann, the commanding officer of the 46th Minesweeping Flotilla and officer on the Naval Commander's staff, returns with Hüffmeier's Chief-of-Staff. Unfortunately no photographs appear to exist of the actual signing or the subsequent one on HMS Beagle — these pictures were all taken by the US Signal Corps.

Lorient, France

Peace overtures at Lorient. On May 7 a French officer waves a flag of truce from the south-eastern bank of the River Etel. (US Army)

After the Channel Islands, it was the turn of three other beleagured and bypassed fortresses to surrender.

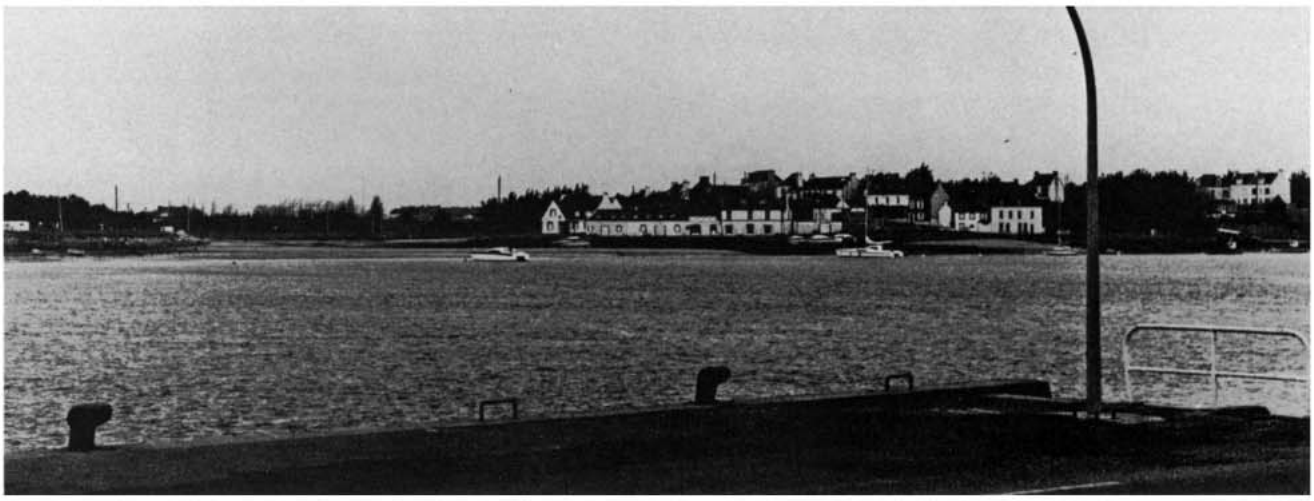
In 1943 OKW had designated as fortresses all the Atlantic harbours that had been extensively fortified. To each was assigned an especially dependable commander who took an oath to defend his fortress to the death. Among the fortresses were the port cities of Dunkirk, Calais, Boulogne, Le Havre, Cherbourg, St Malo, Brest, Lorient and St Nazaire. Of these, Cherbourg had fallen in June although useless because of German demolitions, and at the end of July, as American troops seized Avranches and Pontaubault at the base of the Cotentin, the principal ports of Brittany — St Malo, Brest, Lorient, and St Nazaire — were threatened.

Having been vexed by the failure of the Cherbourg garrison to hold out as long as he expected, Hitler tried to make certain that his fortress commanders in Brittany and in the Pas-de-Calais would not similarly disappoint him. Hoping to deny the Allies the ports he recognised as vital to the success not only of OVERLORD but also of the entire Allied campaign in western Europe, Hitler specifically ordered the fortresses to be held 'to the last man, to the last cartridge'. Hitler's argument was that, since the forces guarding the fortresses were static troops they could not be employed effectively in the war of movement the Allies were certain to initiate. Since they could not conduct mobile operations, they were to fight to the finish within the ports, destroying the harbours in the process. The garrison forces would thus not only destroy the base of the logistical machinery — ports of entry — that the Allies had to erect in order to wage effective war, they would also tie down Allied forces that might otherwise be used in the decisive battle inevitably to be fought on the western approaches to Germany.

In August 1944 one of the most pressing priorities for the Allies was the capture intact of a large port to permit the importation of supplies in sufficient quantity to sustain the drive across France. The OVERLORD planners had envisaged the early capture of St Malo and Brest but a three-week battle for the former (*see After the Battle No. 33*) in August left the town almost totally destroyed and the port beyond hope of immediate repair. Not to be discouraged, the Americans opened the battle for Brest on August 25. As a former French naval base, Brest lacked commercial facilities although it possessed an excellent deep-water harbour and had been used by the United States for the principal movement of its troops in the First World War. In the same way that the Allies hoped the fall of St Malo would weaken the German will to hold out at the other port cities, they hoped that the reduction of Brest would undermine the morale of the garrisons at Lorient and St Nazaire further to the south. After Brest the Allies intended to attack Lorient 'if it was still holding out'. Yet the battle for Brest was a replay of St Malo except that now massive air support was brought to bear. The garrison finally capitulated on September 18 yet all they surrendered was another totally destroyed city and port.

By now SHAEF had been forced to accept the fact that to capture a well-defended port intact, when faced with a well-dug in and implacable foe, was next to impossible. Plans for seizing the other Brittany ports of Lorient and St Nazaire were abandoned; instead the 15,000-man garrison at the former and 12,000 troops at the latter were contained for the remainder of the war. Denied the chance of an all out attack to take the ports, the US 66th

At Etel the river formed the perimeter of the pocket — as the crow flies this is ten miles from the centre of the city.



Receiving a positive reply, the tall 66th Division's Chief-of-Staff, Colonel John Keating, crossed over to Le Magouër to be greeted by Oberst Borst representing the Festungs Kommandant.

Jean Paul Pallud and Gordon Ramsey recreate the scenario nearly forty years later.

Surrender on a bar room table! The destiny of 15,000 men settled, if not at the pull of a pint, at the stroke of a pen: effective 0001 May 8, 1945.

The German delegation led by Oberst Borst crossed to the American-held side of the river where this simple bar quite close to the waterfront at Etel was destined to become the location for affairs of state. A plaque on its wall records the deed.

Infantry Division, nicknamed the 'Black Panthers' from their shoulder patch insignia (which took over from the 83rd and 94th Divisions on January 1, 1945), continued the siege for the next four months, and not until the formal surrender of German forces was signed at Reims did the port commanders finally throw in the towel.

The south-eastern perimeter of the pocket at Lorient was formed by the River Etel and it was here that Germans and Americans faced each other for the last months of the war. On May 7, after ascertaining that the Germans were in the mood to surrender, Colonel John Keating, Chief-of-Staff of the 66th Division, led a group of American and French officers across the river from Etel to the little German-held village of Le Magouër where they were met by Oberst Borst, representing the Festungskommandant, General der Artillerie Wilhelm Fahrmbacker. After an initial parley the German commander agreed to return to the American bank where the surrender document was signed in a nearby café.

The captions to the American photographs taken of the surrender at Lorient specify that the location of the signing was as Belz. However, when we arrived at the town of that name it proved to be totally incorrect and we discovered that in fact the surrender had been signed at Etel, about four kilometres away to the south-west. There an inscribed stone panel on the wall of the Bar Breton proclaimed its historic role and it was a pleasant surprise to find the interior largely unchanged, and to be able to sit down at the original surrender table to quench our thirst.

May 10: Caudan. General der Artillerie Wilhelm Fahrmbacker had one final duty to perform: the personal surrender of his pistol to the Black Panther's commanding general, Major General Herman F. Kramer.

Left: **The roving surrender-taker. Colonel Keating on the move again and pictured here on May 8 a hundred kilometres to the south-east near the little village of Cordemais. Here his opposite number was Major Gerhard Engelken, Chief-of-Staff to Generalleutnant Hans Junck — Kommandant Festung Saint Nazaire. (Signal Corps)** *Right:* **We discovered the picture had been taken some way from the little railway station which had been the scene of many 'truce' meetings during the siege.**

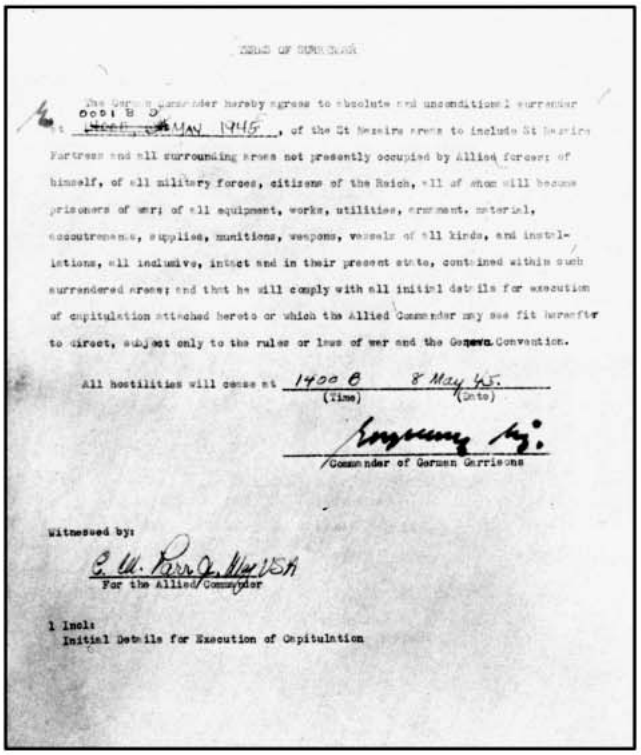
St Nazaire, France

At St Nazaire the American photo captions were equally in error as to the location of the scene of the surrender, being described as the railway station at Cordemais. The station was certainly the rendezvous for several meetings and exchanges of prisoners but the actual surrender was signed some distance away as the 66th Divisional History explains:

'The shell-torn railroad station of Cordemais was the scene of the opening session of the brief negotiations that led to the surrender of the St Nazaire pocket. There on May 7, Colonel John Keating, 66th Division Chief-of-Staff, met with Captain Mueller to discuss terms. The negotiation party moved to a small cafe 100 yards away from the station where in the midst of shambles of what once was the taproom, they laid down their portfolios and started talking. It became apparent immediately to the Allied negotiating [members] that Captain Mueller had little or no authority to commit the German command to any agreement. The meeting broke up with little accomplished except an agreement that they would resume sessions the next morning.

'Talks the following morning were along the same pattern. Captain Mueller talked about "technical details" and asked that we send in technical men to confer on "technical" matters. Keating reminded Mueller that there would be no "discussions" but rather under the unconditional surrender terms, his "technicians" would take orders from the Allies. Impatient at the delay, Colonel Keating demanded whether or not he had full authority to sign the surrender. "Doctor" Mueller had to admit he didn't. Again Keating broke up the meeting and it was agreed that a person with authority to act represent General Junck at a session the same afternoon.

'An elaborate lay-out was prepared for the afternoon's session. Instead of meeting between the lines at Cordemais, the Germans came to our lines where a table was set out in the bright summer sun, enabling photographers to catch and record every movement. Accompanying Captain Mueller was Major Engelken, General Junck's Chief-of-Staff. Tough, handsome Engelken's approach was different from that of the diplomatic Mueller. He gruffly stated that he had come prepared to sign, asked for the papers and after a few minutes of explanatory remarks, with a grunt and a flourish of his well-manicured hand, signed the surrender of 28,000 *(sic)* Germans.'



TERMS OF SURRENDER

The German garrison hereby agrees to absolute and unconditional surrender at [illegible] on 7 MAY 1945, of the St Nazaire area to include St Nazaire Fortress and all surrounding areas not presently occupied by Allied forces; of himself, of all military forces, citizens of the Reich, all of whom will become prisoners of war; of all equipment, works, utilities, armament, material, accoutrements, supplies, munitions, weapons, vessels of all kinds, and installations, all inclusive, intact and in their present state, contained within such surrendered areas; and that he will comply with all initial details for execution of capitulation attached hereto or which the Allied Commander may see fit hereafter to direct, subject only to the rules or laws of war and the Geneva Convention.

All hostilities will cease at 1400 B (Time) 8 May 45. (Date)

Commander of German Garrisons

Witnessed by:

For the Allied Commander

1 Incl:
Initial Details for Execution of Capitulation

Left: **Initially Hauptmann Müller represented the German side but it was soon obvious to the American team that he had no authority from Junck to sign. It was then that Engelken was brought in. Here Müller scrutinises the document** *(right)* **presented for signature which has identical wording to that signed at Lorient except for the place names and times. The text would seem to have been hurriedly put together as it does not conform to SHAEF guidelines. (Signal Corps)**

Another variation on a familiar theme: this time in the centre of a road! Hauptmann Müller on the right and Major Engelken next to Colonel Keating. General Kramer obtained another pistol for his collection when Generalleutnant Junck handed his over at a formal surrender at Bouvron on May 11. (Signal Corps)

When we visited Cordemais in March 1985 the difficulty of identifying the location was compounded by one of the original photographs having been printed back to front — not an unusual occurrence and usually not obvious until one revisits the actual spot. Today a plaque on the wall of Les Sables, besides the crossroads at Croix Marzel, proclaims that the surrender was signed in front of this building, now a private house, and the son of the owner in 1945, Gilbert Moisan, told us that Hauptmann Müller, who negotiated the surrender on behalf of the German Kommandant Generalleutnant Hans Junck, to give him his correct rank, has revisited the spot on at least two occasions since the end of the war.

The tablet memorialises the event . . . and the table still survives in the local Mairie at Cordemais. The Black Panthers completed their hat-trick of surrenders with that of Vize admiral Ernst Schirlitz at 11.45 p.m. on May 8 at La Rochelle.

Dunkirk, France

Three hundred miles away in the Pas-de-Calais, Dunkirk had similarly been bypassed in the advance across northern France. Boulogne and Calais had been captured the previous September by Canadian forces but only after costly battles: necessary to neutralise the nearby cross-Channel gun batteries *(see After the Battle No. 29)*, deny the harbour facilities to German surface raiders, as well as provide a port near to the English coast. However it was decided to bottle up the garrison at Dunkirk and the 2nd Canadian Infantry Division handed over the task to the 4th Special Service Brigade on September 16. Later the task of besieging the port was transferred to the Czech Armoured Brigade of 21st Army Group.

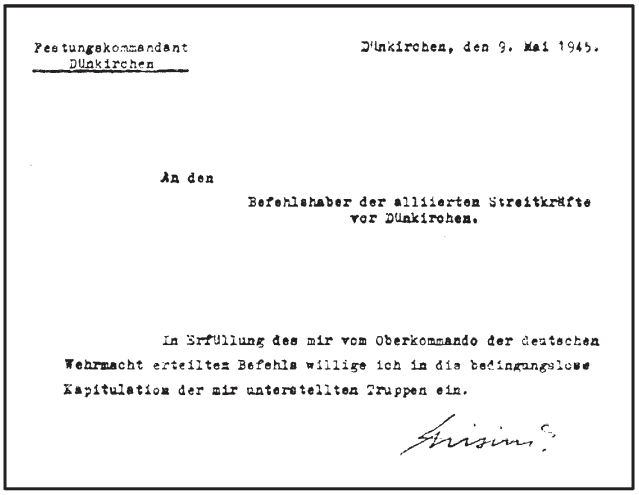
In May 1945 the combined British, French and Czech headquarters was located in Wormhout, some 12 miles inland, and it was here that Vizeadmiral Friedrich Frisius surrendered to Major General Alois Liska, the Czech commanding officer of the Allied Forces surrounding the Dunkirk pocket.

On May 8 SHAEF sent two officers, one British and one Czech, through the German lines with a message for the Festungs Kommandant, advising him of the general surrender which would come into force at midnight. Meeting the two officers in the hospital in Dunkirk, Vizeadmiral Frisius gave the officers a written reply indicating that he would comply with the terms. At 9.20 a.m. the following day, the Vizeadmiral and his staff arrived at Port à Poissons on the southern perimeter of the pocket whereupon they were escorted to General Liska's HQ in the Château de Maes on the Rue de Wylder, Frisius apologising that his lateness was due to having a slow car. As well as Czech and British officers assembled at the Château, there were two French officers which annoyed the German commander as he had assumed he would be surrendering to the British and Czechs exclusively. In the event he produced from his pocket a typed sheet dated May 9 which he had already signed, accepting the terms of surrender, which was promptly pocketed by General Liska. Vizeadmiral Frisius was not required to sign any further document and his men began laying down their arms at 6.00 p.m. that evening.

We were disappointed to find that General Liska's headquarters was demolished some years ago. It stood just outside Wormhout on the D56 to Wylder and has now been replaced with a new house with thatched roof.

Chateau de Maes at Wormhout — Major General Alois Liska's HQ sadly now replaced by this villa although the stable block behind which still stands, seen on the right, gives a point of reference for our comparison.

It is fitting that our round-up of the German surrender sites ends at Dunkirk for it was here that Britain and France signed the Treaty of Dunkirk on March 4, 1947. Long forgotten by many, it bound the two countries to a 50-year military and economic alliance, cementing the tie between the two original western Allies of 1939 in the war in Europe against Germany.



Festungskommandant
Dünkirchen

Dünkirchen, den 9. Mai 1945.

An den

Befehlshaber der alliierten Streitkräfte
vor Dünkirchen.

In Erfüllung des mir vom Oberkommando der deutschen Wehrmacht erteilten Befehls willige ich in die bedingungslose Kapitulation der mir unterstellten Truppen ein.

Frisius

DIY surrender at Dunkirk. When Vizeadmiral Friedrich Frisius, Festungs Kommandant, arrived at General Liska's HQ he brought his own document already signed! (US Army)

MICHAEL WITTMANN'S LAST BATTLE

BY LES 'SPUD' TAYLOR

SS-Hauptsturmführer Michael Wittmann, Iron Cross 2nd Class, Iron Cross 1st Class, Knight's Cross, Oakleaves and Swords to Knight's Cross, missing in action on August 8, 1944 was without doubt the most successful tank commander of World War II. The appalling losses which this twice wounded officer inficted upon Allied armour and men is on record, and a graphic account of his almost single-handed battle at Villers-Bocage in Normandy on June 13, 1944 which successfully stopped the advance of the 22nd Armoured Brigade, 7th Armoured Division (Desert Rats), and which caused such enormous casualties to the 4th County of London Yeomanry (Sharpshooters), was described and illustrated in detail for the first time in *Panzers in Normandy Then and Now* published by After the Battle.

The final conflict in which this SS Captain met his demise, would probably have remained a mystery to this day but for the on-the-spot research by Jean Paul Pallud who, while working on that publication as technical adviser in 1981, was able to pin-point the exact spot where Wittmann and his crew met their deaths. I served with 'A' Squadron, No. 4 Troop of the 1st Northamptonshire Yeomanry and, although I personally was not in at the kill being some four miles back, Jean Paul's evidence has at long last enabled me to relate what I had suspected for twenty years or more: that the destruction of Wittmann's tank force that summer's afternoon in August 1944 was carried out by our men and not, as has frequently been stated, by a Canadian unit.

Two members of Wittmann's usual crew absent that day were his gun-layer, SS-

Michael Wittmann: born Vogelthal, Germany, April 22, 1914; died Gaumesnil, France, August 8, 1944. (Bundesarchiv)
Top: **When knocked out during Operation Totalize south of Caen, SS-Hauptsturmführer Wittmann was fighting in Tiger 007 from the battalion staff instead of his usual mount 205 as the 2. Kompanie commander. (Munin Verlag)**

Until now it has been assumed that a unit of the Canadian 4th Armoured Division — seen here advancing towards Cintheaux on August 8, was responsible for knocking out Germany's most renowned tank commander. (Public Archives of Canada)

Oberscharführer Balthasar Woll, with whom Wittmann gained most of his success in Russia and who shared in his victory at Villers-Bocage, and SS-Obersturmführer Werner Wolff, both of whom held the Iron Cross 1st and 2nd Class and the Ritterkreuz. SS-Unterscharführer Heinrich Reimers was the driver; the other members of his tank crew on that day being SS-Unterscharführer Karl Wagner, the chief gunner, SS-Sturmmann Rudolf Hirschel, radio operator, and Günther Weber, the gun-loader.

Such feats as Wittmann and his crew achieved in battle, I think, were made possible by the fearsome power of that metal monster and its renowned 88mm gun: the Tiger tank. Wittmann was shooting up Shermans at a range of 1,800 metres, i.e. nearly 2,000 yards, at which range an 88mm armour-piercing shell came in like a 'knife through butter'. As Sherman crews, we watched in dismay as our 75mm shells were deflected off the thick armour which we were unable to penetrate, except at very close quarters. The Sherman tank burned so easily that it earned itself the unenviable name of 'Tommy Cooker' amongst the German troops, and the unfortunate crew knew that, more often than not, when the Sherman 'brewed up' they only had a fifty-fifty chance of baling out.

The First Canadian Army's attack southwards astride the Caen-Falaise road had two phases: the first, Operation TOTALIZE, being launched on the night of August 7/8 after a saturation of the defences by Bomber Command and the Eighth Air Force, later

0330 Only two tanks and three Priests had been hit in the March. By 0330 all Inf had been collected and organized and render a continuous screen of Browning fire on every likely place, they advanced on the village. Here anti-tank guns were abandoned by their crews and by 0430 exploitation forward of the village was complete and many prisoners taken, mainly from the 89th. Inf Regt. who had moved in from Norway two days before. Heavy mortaring and some shells started to come down, C Sqn on left attempted to exploit into the village; shot up a strong point ROBERTMESNIL and got as far as a wood North of that village.

1220 Three Tiger (VI) reported moving towards A Sqn.; and were brewed at 1240, 1247 and 1252 hrs. all without loss. Later 200 Inf with 20 tanks in support formed up to counter attack and ina bombing attack which followed some bombs fell in own area.

1330 Polish Armd Div started to pass through on left flank, were held up and withdrew.

1340. Counterattack was repulsed with a heavy loss to enemy; considerable number of killed can be claimed; P.C.'. were handed over to Black Watch; claim five Tigers, four Panthers (VI) six Mark IVs and five S.P.Guns. Three tanks claimed by Captain Boardman personally. Unit casualties 20 tanks including five Sherman 5cs; 2 Offrs and 10 ORs Killed, 11 Offrs and 40 ORs wounded including C.O. Lieut.Col.D. Forster and Major P.E.Brassey commanding B Sqn.(List attached as Appx B)

2330 Unit withdrew to HUBERT - FOLIE for night.

0815 Returned to ST.AIGNAN DE CRAMESNIL and into position with B Sqn u/c Capt.Rathbone with A Company of 1st.Black Watch remainder in reserve.

1300 Bde with 51 Highland Div. came out and 2nd Canadian Corps and

Now research has proved that Trooper Joe Ekins manning the 17-pdr in a Firefly of 'A' Squadron, 1st Northamptonshire Yeomanry, fired the fatal shots; the War Diary gives the time: either 1240, 1247 or 1252. (Public Record Office)

Around 1947 Major Peter Brassey, who was wounded in the battle (see diary), returned to St Aignan-de-Cramesnil where he found this Tiger still in situ. Because of large-scale alterations to the landscape south of the village due to intensive farming, we could not establish its precise location but Lord Boardman comments that this particular Tiger 'was not one of those commanded by Wittmann but one of others knocked out in that battle'.

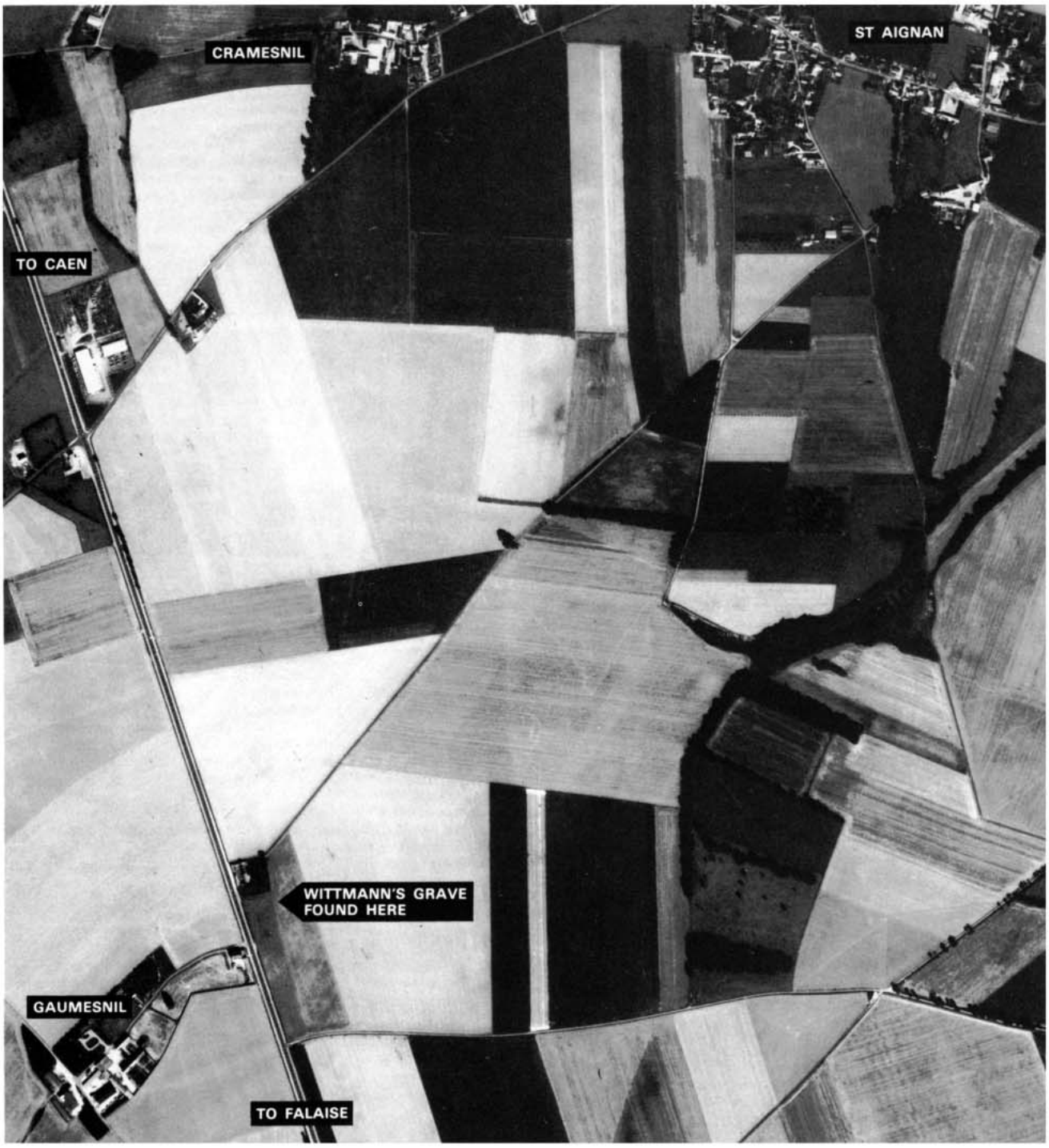
This picture from the RAF photo-reconnaissance archive at Keele University is a remarkable discovery for it shows the precise area of the battlefield on the very next day. Wittmann's four Tigers lying immobilised are ringed, and numerous Allied vehicles are concentrated along and beside the N158. The intensity of the fighting is demonstrated graphically by the pock-marked landscape. (Crown Copyright)

followed on August 14 by the second phase, Operation TRACTABLE. On the right of the N158 the Canadians were formed into four parallel columns while the British were in three columns on the opposite side.

St Aignan-de-Cramesnil was and is a small village like so many others to be found in their hundreds dotted around the Normandy countryside. It is situated in the Canton of Bourguébus approximately one and a half kilometres to the east of the N158 main road from Caen to Falaise north-east of Cintheaux, approached through the smaller village of Cramesnil by a second class road which bisects St Aignan on its way to Conteville. Surrounding the village were several orchards most of which have now been removed and planted with crops. Of the largest, shaped roughly like the letter 'K', only one leg now remains. On the right, a gap in those orchards revealed open cornfields. Southwards a steep-sided gully, 'Le Petit Ravin', wound round in a loop opposite the hamlet of Gaumesnil, across the centre to the left and on the rear of St Aignan, backed by a ridge describing exactly the line of the 100-metre contour. On the track from St Aignan to Gaumesnil was a triangular-shaped wood which still remains much the same today as it was those forty years ago. This then was the stage on which Wittmann's last battle was destined to be fought. Who then was his adversary?

The 1st Northamptonshire Yeomanry, a first line armoured cavalry regiment of the 33rd Independent Armoured Brigade, had landed in Normandy around D plus 6. They were equipped with Sherman tanks and had already fought a number of battles in the bridgehead, notably at Caen and Noyers-Bocage.

The regiment had arrived at the location just described by way of Bourguébus, carrying its own infantry, the 1st Battalion, The Black Watch of the 51st Highland Division, in armoured 'Kangaroo' carriers. The completely armoured column was a part of Operation TOTALIZE and consisted of approximately two hundred vehicles. The column had formed up at 2215 hours on August 7, and it was under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Douglas Forster with Captain Tom Boardman as navigating officer. (The latter is now Colonel Lord Boardman of Welford, MC, TD, DL.) At 0238 hours the



The stark contrast today. Tracks have disappeared, orchards cut down, trees and hedges swept away and even the layout of the fields completely altered. Virtually the entire face of the battlefield has changed: what a world war failed to accomplish, the Common Market agricultural policy has achieved in a decade! (Institut Géographique National)

head of the column arrived within fifty yards of the pre-selected spot in a thick hedge. All the many difficulties considered, it was a remarkable piece of night navigation as recalled by Trooper Eric Rutledge, Lord Boardman's ex-gunner: 'I think he did a terrific job navigating all that column, firing away with the Very pistol. What a night!'

Supported by the Yeomanry tanks, the Black Watch attacked the village, a number of prisoners being taken in the process. By daylight the objective was firmly in their hands and St Aignan-de-Cramesnil was now a small island in the middle of German held territory, four miles behind the enemy front line.

On the morning of August 8 'B' Squadron were north of the village in a semi-circle with one troop in contact with the 144th Regiment, Royal Armoured Corps, at Cramesnil, which itself was in touch with the Canadians out on their western flank. The remainder of the squadron were facing due east giving rear protection. Regimental HQ had its headquarters in a small orchard north of the village.

'C' Squadron were forward of the built-up area also in a semi-circle facing east, south-east and south. They were later to push one troop over 'Le Petit Ravin', a feature which was to prove such a thorn in the side of the Yeomanry tanks.

'A' Squadron were located in the large orchards facing due south with No. 3 Troop on the right keeping an eye on the main road to Falaise. The Black Watch had positions in St Aignan and also 'A' and 'C' Squadron areas.

On August 7, the 2. Kompanie from the heavy tank battalion schwere SS-Panzer-Abteilung 101, with Michael Wittmann in command, was ready to support elements of the 12. SS-Panzer-Division 'Hitlerjugend' which had been ordered to counter-attack the forces from Operation TOTALIZE advancing southward along the Caen-Falaise road. The division's Kampfgruppe Waldmüller — the I. Bataillon of SS-Panzergrenadier-Regiment 25 under the command of SS-Sturmbannführer Hans Waldmüller — would be backed for this counter-attack by 10 Tigers from Wittmann's 2. Kompanie; by some 40 Panzer IVs from the II. Abteilung of SS-Panzer-Regiment 12; 10 Jagdpanzer IVs from the 1. Kompanie of

Unfortunately no photographs exist of Wittmann with his crew in the August 8 battle. However this photograph (and the portrait on page 46) was taken either shortly before or after his most famous exploit at Villers-Bocage on June 13 for which he was awarded the Swords to his Knight's Cross. He and his crew had been credited with destroying 138 tanks and 132 anti-tank guns in less than two years when they were killed.

SS-Panzer-Jäger-Abteilung 12, and three artillery battalions from SS-Panzer-Artillerie-Regiment 12. Kampfgruppe Waldmüller was ordered to attack east of the N158 and reach the high ground just south of St Aignan.

The 'Hitlerjugend' commander SS-Oberführer Kurt Meyer (the brigadier who was better known as 'Panzer Meyer') had arrived, and Waldmüller was going over the final details of the attack with Wittmann, whose Tigers were hidden behind a hedge, when a solitary bomber flew over the spot several times sending out coloured flares. Meyer could foresee what was coming so he abruptly brought forward the operation which had originally been set for 1230 hours. After Meyer had shaken Wittmann by the hand, reminding him again of the importance of the attack, the ace of all tank aces clambered aboard his Tiger.

The German armour then set off northwards, seeking out any depressions in the ground in order to stop and fire before crossing the open cornfields at top speed. Meanwhile the 'Hitlerjugend' panzergrenadiers followed on behind. The tanks were met with artillery fire, but Wittmann pushed on even faster and they got through unscathed. At 1,800 metres, using their superior range, the Tigers began to shoot up the Shermans advancing towards Cintheaux, one assumes from the high ground in the vicinity of Point 112, the unfortunate recipients being the Canadians out to the west, who were to receive grievous casualties during the days which followed.

So it was that Michael Wittmann and his troop of three Tiger tanks were to be seen that sunny afternoon approaching Gaumesnil from the south in line ahead beside the N158 as part of the armour engaged in the 'Hitlerjugend' attack.

Apart from some heavy mortar and shellfire on the village, the morning of Tuesday, August 8 had been quiet until 1030 hours when Lieutenant-Colonel Forster had been badly wounded by a shell burst and had to be evacuated by the medical half-track. Later a formation of Allied aircraft, on their way to attack German positions in the area around Cintheaux, dropped their bombs on the regiment's positions, fortunately without causing any casualties.

'A' Squadron, No. 3 Troop, who were forward on the right flank watching the main road, were the first to report three Tiger tanks (Wittmann's) advancing slowly north alongside the N158. This was at a range of 1,200 yards. Captain Boardman, the Squadron second in command, immediately ordered the troop to hold their fire to enable him to move to their position in order to control the shooting. Lord Boardman recalls that 'one of my troops radioed of the advance of these tanks and I moved across to that part of our front in my Sherman. We held our fire whilst I called up one of our 'Fireflies' which carried 17-pdr guns. Had I known who was commanding those Tiger tanks, and his record, I should have been even more concerned than I was — if possible. It was bad enough to know that we had only four tanks in the Squadron with guns capable of penetrating a Tiger's armour and that I had only one of those in my section of the battlefield'.

Meanwhile the three panzers still continued on their course on the east side of the main road in line ahead and had by this time closed the range to 800 yards.

'What does surprise me,' continues Lord Boardman 'is that the ace German tank commander should have led his tanks in line ahead across our field of fire, presenting perfect targets. I returned to St Aignan with a party in 1984 and Ray Ager, my co-driver during this operation, was present. Seeing the ground again confirmed both our recollections of the advance of the Tiger tanks along the east side of the Falaise–Caen road. They were exposing their right flanks to the orchards where 'A' Squadron were sited, presenting ideal targets, yet our major problem was that we knew that our 75mm Sherman tank guns would not penetrate their armour. I think, that Wittmann must have assumed that any threat would come from the west of the road, from the area of Bretteville-sur-Laize, and that he was keeping himself covered from that direction.'

1240 hours

At 800 yards Captain Boardman gave the order to open fire. Sergeant Gordon in command of the 17-pdr Sherman engaged the rear tank of the three. His gunner, Trooper Joe Ekins, fired two shots which brewed it up. The second tank traversed right and fired three shots at the Firefly, which was already reversing into cover. Although all three shells missed their target, unfortunately the turret flap received a glancing blow and this flap struck Sergeant Gordon's head. Dazed he climbed out of his tank and was immediately wounded. His Troop Leader, Lieutenant James, took command of the tank and moved to a new fire position.

1247 hours

Trooper Ekins fired one shot at the second tank and it exploded in a flash of flame. By this time the leading third Tiger was milling around under heavy 75mm fire from the rest of the troop.

1252 hours

Two shots from Trooper Ekins settled the matter and this tank also started to burn.

1255 hours

An estimated fifteen to twenty tanks were observed advancing east to west at a range of 1,200 yards due south. They had plenty of

Another victim at Cintheaux — a Jagdpanzer IV of SS-Panzer-Jäger-Abteilung 12. (Munin Verlag: Kriegsgeschichte der 12. SS-Panzer-Division)

cover and were not good targets, Trooper Ekins — ever keen — fired one shot at the lead tank at 1,200 yards and was rewarded with the usual bonfire. Some withdrew, but others, as later events were to prove, worked their way into 'Le Petit Ravin' with drastic consequences for 'A' Squadron.

1300 hours

Two Mark IVs moving on the west side of the Falaise road at a range of 1,800 yards were sighted. Trooper John 'Joe' Crittenden in another Firefly fired two shots and both brewed up — a brilliant piece of shooting. Thus in the short space of time of under twenty minutes, SS-Hauptsturmführer Michael Wittmann, ace tank commander, had fought and lost his last battle.

(Trooper Joe Ekins, who displayed remarkable marksmanship, I am happy to relate survived the war and by a strange coincidence, as I was penning the above lines, I received a telephone call from him.)

Eric Rutledge, Captain Boardman's gunner, says that 'I can still see them coming through the cornfields. I fired at the first and it stopped, after that there seemed lots of activity all around and Shermans getting between us and the Tigers; everybody having a go.' Lord Boardman believes that 'the fire from my tank and the others in the troop, all of which were 75mm, did not penetrate the armour but probably damaged the third one which seemed to go out of control and eventually stopped. What is now beyond doubt is that, it was 'A' Squadron, 1st Northamptonshire Yeomanry, that finally despatched the most distinguished of all German tank crews.'

The medical officer of schwere SS-Panzer-Abteilung 101, SS-Hauptsturmführer Dr Wolfgang Rabe, watched the engagement in which the Tigers were taking part from some distance away. Four of them had taken up position on the country lane running north-eastwards from Cintheaux — about 300 metres from the Route Nationale. They were stationed between a high, thick hedge and a row of bushes running parallel with it on the left. Dr Rabe writes: 'Wittmann was with four or five Tigers to the east of the road leading to Caen. I was to the side of them. The panzers received hits, ostensibly direct ones, from English 15cm *(sic)* guns. Some of the Tigers burst into flames, and I tried to make sure whether anyone had got out of them. As I saw nobody I thought that someone might have been able to emerge through the bottom hatches of the panzers. I tried to get nearer to them but this was impossible as I came under fire as soon as I left the road ditch in an easterly direction. We waited between two and three hours more to see if one of the crews would still emerge. Towards evening, I went to SS-Brigadeführer Kraemer (Chief-of-Staff of I. SS-Panzerkorps) and told him what had happened. He ordered me, as I was the longest-serving senior officer in the unit, to withdraw the remainder of it, and put me under the command of Wünsche'.

When SS-Obersturmbannführer Max Wünsche learnt later that Michael Wittmann was missing, he ordered a search to be made for him. Later SS-Sturmmann Horst Borgsmüller said that 'I received the order to search for Wittmann and his crew to the right and left of the N158. My driver, SS-Sturmmann Klein, and I first drove towards Hautmesnil. It was growing dark and I couldn't make anything out clearly. After a time, we came under machine gun fire from the right of the road. Searches through the countryside and in the advance dressing stations were in vain. I heard from grenadiers that Tigers on the right of the road had been knocked out by enemy anti-tank guns. SS-Obersturmführer Wendorf from the Tiger unit could not tell me anything either. On the instructions of SS-Hauptsturmführer Isecke [the adjutant of SS-Panzer-Regiment 12] I drove towards Grainville again during the night. I then came to the forward command post of SS-Obersturmbannführer Mohnke [the commander of SS-Panzergrenadier-Regiment 26]. He warned me to drive on, as the enemy were already close at hand. We tried to go a little further but as flares went up we again came under fire from the right.'

Wittmann and his crew were listed as missing in action and the commander of schwere SS-Panzer-Abteilung 101, SS-Obersturmbannführer Heinz von Westernhagen, brought news of his fate to Frau Wittmann and gave her a sketch of the area where her husband had fought his last battle.

In 1947 the Tiger unit's combat historian, SS-Rottenführer Herbert Debusmann, was assigned to collecting ammunition in this area while a prisoner of war. He found that five knocked-out or broken down Tigers littered the area with two Panzer IVs nearby. One Tiger was standing on the lane leading from St Aignan to Gaumesnil, and four others on *(sic)* the road from St Aignan to Cintheaux. The distinguishing marks of schwere SS-Panzer-Abteilung 101 were clearly visible. One of the Tigers numbered 007 had its turret ripped off. This was the unit commander's tank but he knew that Heinz von Westernhagen had not taken part in this battle because of sickness. The report that Herbert Debusmann wrote included the following: 'The turret of 007 — the rearmost of the four panzers — was lying some metres away from the hull. I do not believe that it is possible to say whether Michael Wittmann was in this panzer or not. It is known that he was reluctant to enter one of the tanks allotted to the staff or the commander, as the radio equipment installed

A GERMAN VIEW

'After surveying our objective and agreeing on possible danger points and methods of approach, we climbed aboard our panzer and explained the situation both to Arno, the chief gunner, the gun-loader Karl, and Egon the radio operator. "Ready then, load up! Panzer marsch!" With nerves stretched to breaking point, each was alone with his thoughts. Not a sound inside the tank except the throbbing of the engine. We carefully crawled up and pushed forwards to the crest of the slope. What was waiting for us on the other side? Otto (SS-Unterscharführer Otto Knof, the tank commander) was standing in the hatch. "Slower . . . a little higher . . . Stop! Turret to 3 o'clock. Target line-up is edge of wood". Still nothing. "Helmut, Marsch! Marsch!" I engaged the next gear and used full throttle. On the far side of the slope, I could make out the edge of the woods and steered towards its left corner. We wanted to go round this to see what lay behind it. Then came a violent rattling from the outer edges — machine gun and rifle fire. Our MG turret fired. I could recognize an enemy machine gun firing at us. I declutched and gave target directions to the front machine gun. Egon fired it. Everything was happening at breakneck speed. Then there were enemy soldiers bringing a gun into position. I notified the target and gave target directions for the front MG. Our gun fired while we were moving at speed. Otto shouted out orders: "Halt, Halt! Reverse, reverse! Quicker!" I knew the motor was running at maximum revolutions and couldn't get us back any faster. I turned to look at the instrument panel. The rev counter was right over the top. As I tried to peer through my observation slot, I was dazzled by a brilliant flash. There was a thud, just like a bottle full of mineral water smashing to pieces on a stone floor. Now we've taken a head-on hit, I thought. Then the panzer was shaking as if struck by a giant fist. There was a bright light, and screaming, screeching and splintering noises — all seemingly inhuman.

'A smell of sulphur, and complete silence. Then I heard Otto's voice: "Everyone out! The tank's burning!" I unbolted my hatch and pushed it up but it only opened a few inches. Flames immediately burst through. I turned to see how Egon, the radio operator, was pulling his legs out of his hatch and decided that that was the way out. Over the gears, pushing the radio equipment out of the way, I was out of breath. It was getting so hot. I had to get out, I couldn't take any more. Further away, I could see a face and arms stretched out towards me. He called out: "Helmut, come on out". After ripping and pulling, I breathed fresh air. Outside now, I jumped away and let myself fall down. Egon had come back and dragged me out. Thank you, comrade! Egon helped to get me upright. I was on my feet again with bullets zipping past and clanging against the hull of the panzer. We jumped round to the side facing away from the enemy, and found Otto there. Where were Arno and Karl? Otto pointed to the turret and the two side hatches still both shut, and cried: "They were both killed on the spot. I was still inside!" I couldn't grasp it. Arno Elthus from Könisberg in East Prussia was my chief gunner. We had been together with Otto in the same panzer ever since Hasselt, in the first engagements and shoot-ups. The three of us always together. And now he was gone, just stuck there in the turret. A ghastly realization.

Black smoke was pouring out of the open hatches. We ran in the direction of our front line. Suddenly I heard someone cry: "Helmut, you're burning!" I rolled on the ground and Otto and Egon helped to smother the flames. Machine gun bullets were zipping past us again. We ran and ran, till at last we reached the reverse side of the slope and saw German soldiers and houses. A group of soldiers came and spoke to us but I couldn't take anything in except the pain I felt; the searing pain of the burns. Then everything went black and quiet. I found myself in a room, lying on the ground and unable to move. Just groaning from the pain I felt. Someone came to attend to me but I couldn't see him. Then I suddenly understood as a voice said: "Easy now, just keep still. You're safe now in our advanced dressing station." Everything went dark again. Then Otto was suddenly there, saying: "When it's dark I'll fetch you out and take you with me". That made me happy. Then it went black again. The floor was trembling and motors were humming. Voices called out: "The panzers are beating it". A deep disappointment but Otto still wanted to fetch me. Daylight was showing through the door. There were strange uniforms around me and I could clearly hear voices asking: "Who is here from the SS?" Then came infantry fire, shell-bursts, a quick loading into the ambulance, severe pains, and another black-out. I went through the hospital tent at Caen and the following sea voyage as if in a trance, and mostly unconscious. On August 21 I realised that I was in Leeds and that I was a prisoner of war.'

SS-Sturmmann Helmut Wiese, a driver with a Panzer IV of 5. Kompanie, SS-Panzer-Regiment 12, took part in the attack with Kampfgruppe Waldmüller. His dressing station was captured on August 9 by troops of the 1st Polish Armoured Division.

in these (for ground to air communication) meant that they carried about 30 shells less than the other tanks.

'At a distance of about 1,500 metres from this point — in the direction of Caen, but further away from the Route Nationale — there was a Tiger from the 2. Kompanie still to be seen. It had not been shattered with shellfire, but appeared to be completely intact. Its tracks were undamaged, and I could not find evidence of any technical defects. Nothing had been blown up, and this panzer was carrying a full supply of ammunition'.

When the battlefront had moved past an area the Army Graves Registration Service moved in and work began, often using PoW labour, to concentrate individual battlefield graves into the formal cemeteries. Many burials made in the heat of battle were rough and ready and identification was not always recorded on the temporary marker. When such remains were exhumed, often they had to be reburied as unknown. Some graves lay on agricultural land and if, when the farmer reinstated his property, the markers were removed the grave was effectively 'lost'.

By the time the Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge (the German War Graves Commission) began its work in this corner of France in 1956 to permanently commemmorate Germany's dead they were faced with many unidentified remains. As there was still no trace of Wittmann or his

George Martin and Serge Roussel on the staff of the Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge at Saint-Désir-de-Lisieux spent several days digging in the area around the spot where Tiger 007 was knocked out. The N158 can be seen in the background. (VDK)

Positive evidence was found when this identification disc indicated the remains of Wittmann's driver, SS-Unterscharführer Heinrich Reimers. (German Erkennungsmarke are not named; one needs to refer to the personal service records in order to decipher the inscription.) The pistol was found in Wittmann's uniform jacket pocket.

crew, it was assumed that they had been exhumed and reburied by Allied graves teams as unknown German soldiers. Although records from the Army Graves Registration Service were passed to the German authorities, there was no indication as to the possible location of any remains removed from a cornfield beside the N158 at Gaumesnil.

In 1982, during the preparation for *Panzers in Normandy — Then and Now* Jean Paul Pallud, visited Gaumesnil to research Wittmann's last battle. There he found fragments from the Tigers in the field to the east of the road and established the location where two communal graves had been dug with the help of local civilians to bury the German dead. Through talking to the son of the Frenchman who had been in charge of the French burial detail, Jean Paul established that one of the bodies, badly mutilated, was wearing black shoes, not boots, suggesting that an officer had been buried in the northernmost grave, not far from the spot where Wittmann's tank had been destroyed. A sketch plan of the area was passed to the German War Graves Commission by the Editor of *After the Battle* in September 1982 requesting information on the current location of any remains removed from the field.

The Commission decided that a further

At peace at last at La Cambe with his countrymen — the end of a 40-year mystery.

Above: **Evidence of the battle forty years on. Where the tanks were brewed up still nothing grows on the barren soil — this is the spot where a Sherman was knocked out just in front of St Aignan.** *Right:* **Shell canisters and ammunition boxes in 'Le Petit Ravin'.**

search of the area must be carried out and in the last week of March 1983 staff based at Saint-Désir-de-Lisieux under Herr Otto Horst uncovered human remains which were established as German from fragments of uniform. From these — black material, boots, crew belts, etc., — it was apparent that they had uncovered the grave of a tank crew, and an officer's belt buckle and braid indicated the presence of the commander. A set of false incisor teeth were matched with Wittmann's dental records and an identity disc gave the positive identification of the presence of Heinrich Reimers, the driver of Tiger 007.

The bones were so intermingled that they could not be individually identified and they were buried in a common grave No. 120 in Row 3 of Block 47 in the German war cemetery at La Cambe. A 6.35mm pistol was retained by the Commission and is now displayed at their headquarters at Kassel together with Reimers' identification disc.

The following year, on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of D-Day, a party of veterans of the 1st Northamptonshire Yeomanry led by Lord Boardman revisited Normandy as part of our own special pilgrimage. We visited several of the towns we had been instrumental in liberating in 1944 and the cemeteries where we left comrades behind. One high spot was our stop at St Aignan where we walked over the old battlefield, the positions where tanks were brewed up still discernable by the lack of growth at that particular spot. Since 1944 the battlefield of St Aignan has remained unmarked: now a Northamptonshire lime tree stands there with plaques in both French and English remembering the dead Yeomen who did not return from France in 1944. It was fitting that our most formidable enemy, for so many years missing in action, had found a last resting place alongside those of his countrymen who likewise also remain forever in the soil of France.

Centre: **The Yeoman return to the graves of their comrades at St-Désir-de-Lisieux — here lie six men of the Regiment. Those killed opposing Kampfgruppe Waldmüller on August 8 lie at Banneville, east of Caen. Ceremony on Sunday, June 17 being led by Lord Boardman.** *Right:* **The previous day at St Aignan, Lieutenant Colonel the Hon Peter Brassey helps plant a Tree of Remembrance during the 40th Anniversary pilgrimage of the 1st Northamptonshire Yeomanry.**

TITLE DEED — ST AIGNAN

Excuse me, French farmer, you walk on my land
Though you fence it and think it your own;
Your family have tilled it since William was Duke
With title deeds sealed in Caen Town.

Plantagenets conquered it centuries ago
Their trumpets and tabards are dust,
The Panzers invaded and dug in a while
In tanks long surrendered to rust.

I came here to free you in freshness of youth
A silver horse badge on my tank,
But my limbs were unnerved in the dawn flash of death
And I slept under your corn-crowned bank.

My name's on a headstone in Banneville Campagne
As deed of possession just here,
So let's own it and till it together, mon frère,
Your sweat and my blood, but no tears.

Ken Tout, 'C' Squadron, 1st Northamptonshire Yeomanry, 1944 and 1980

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